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## Contents

ART AND ART HISTORY 291–92, 299–300, 302–03, 313–18,  
BIOGRAPHY AND MEMOIRS 294, FICTION 293, 311,  
GERMAN LITERATURE 309, HISTORY 297, 308, LANGUAGE  
AND FOLKLORE 295, POETRY 312, POLITICS 296, SOCIAL  
HISTORY 310, SOCIAL STUDIES 298

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Cover picture: Boccioni's 'Dinamismo astratto', 1912, reproduced from the book reviewed on pages 291–92.

## In the interests of modernity

### John Golding

MAURIZIO CALVESI and ESTER COEN

Boccioni

555pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Milan: Electa, £70.

Although Boccioni was the most talented of the Italian Futurists, one of the most notable features of his work is how uncomfortable he was with middle grounds. Time and again he presents us with an image placed well to the fore, and a distant view floating or suspended directly behind it. This explains his predilection for posing his sitters in front of open windows, a situation in which the near and the far seem to come together naturally. In the finest of all the self-portraits, painted in 1908 and now in the Brera, he shows himself on the balcony of an apartment block; the houses beyond cannot really be very far away, but they seem to exist visually at an enormous distance, as though experienced in a dream. Conversely, some of the early landscapes are virtually all middle ground. But more often than not there is nothing to lead the eye into them so that they give the uncomfortable impression of existing in a physical and psychological limbo. The high quality of many of the reproductions and the imaginative lay-out of this catalogue raisonné bring out these features as never before.

Certainly there was no middle ground in the landscape of Boccioni's mind. The Milanese journal of 1907 introduces him to us as a young man with a quick, febrile mind, slightly coarse in fibre. He was already aware of the contradictory nature of many of his enthusiasms, even of the contradictions in his own nature. But his intellectual aggressiveness, his restlessness, his desire for instant success all prevented him from pausing to reconcile or even analyse these dichotomies. Towards the end of his life he spoke melodramatically of carrying the weight of a hundred years of art on his shoulders – but here again there was in a sense no middle ground. He had grown up with an awareness of the Italian Renaissance, its debt to the classical world and its legacy to the baroque of the *seicento*; and although during the halcyon days of Futurism he had sought to reject or disown this inheritance, he was subsequently to accept its importance for him in a sullen, somewhat grudging manner. He rode to fame as a champion of modernism on Futurism's 'roaring motor car which seems to run on machine gun fire... more beautiful than the Victory of Samothrace'. But about the origins of modernism, from the late eighteenth cen-

tury onwards, he understood in fact painfully little. His attitude to the nineteenth century always remained ambivalent: he could never make up his mind what he wanted to take from it and what, in the interests of modernity, he should reject.

In his weighty introduction Maurizio Calvesi refers to Boccioni as a complex artist, and in certain respects this is perhaps true. Although his career was a short one he pushed himself incredibly hard and left behind an impressive body of work. He worked his way through a huge range of sources and influences, many of them antithetical. His achievements as a sculptor rival his painting; he became an accomplished pamphleteer and produced some important manifestos, including one on architecture. He wrote a book and a play, and, it could now be argued, he was an effective performance artist as well. And yet – and here again this volume helps – there are few major twentieth-century artists whose careers can be charted with such clarity. In today's climate of anti-modernism it is a career that looks more interesting, more relevant to the issues of contemporary art than ever before.

The early intellectual influences were of the grandest. Wagner looms large in the journal and we learn that Boccioni is reading, amongst a host of others, Goethe, Baudelaire, Balzac and, most prophetically, those whose careers can be charted with such clarity. In today's climate of anti-modernism it is a career that looks more interesting, more relevant to the issues of contemporary art than ever before. The early intellectual influences were of the grandest. Wagner looms large in the journal and we learn that Boccioni is reading, amongst a host of others, Goethe, Baudelaire, Balzac and, most prophetically, those whose careers can be charted with such clarity. In today's climate of anti-modernism it is a career that looks more interesting, more relevant to the issues of contemporary art than ever before.

In the journal, Boccioni quotes from Ibsen, whose writings must have helped to prepare him for the subsequent revelation of Munch, the most avant-garde of his visual sources to date. Boccioni must have known Munch's work mainly in reproduction although some examples of the graphic work had by now

found their way to Milan. But 'Il Lutto' of 1910, the most important of the Munchian pieces, is not a particularly good painting, although it has about it a certain wild intensity; the handling of the subject is banal and the attempt to bend a divisionist technique to Expressionist ends is not successful. And the deep provincialism of Boccioni's vision at this time is underlined by the fact that when he visited Paris in 1907 he seems to have gone there primarily to look at an exhibition of Italian Divisionists. Of their French colleagues who had initiated the style he seems to have known or cared little.

The foundation manifesto of Futurism appeared on February 20, 1909, and Boccioni's meeting with its author, Marinetti, came a few weeks later. It was a fateful and in some respects a fatal encounter. Marinetti undoubtedly produced a platform for Boccioni, and his talents as an entrepreneur and impresario were responsible for bringing Boccioni the fame and notoriety he acquired almost immediately. But in other respects he was not the best of mentors. In many ways the two men were temperamentally too alike. Marinetti certainly helped to foster and promote those aspects of Boccioni's character that were most superficial and self-destructive. If Boccioni's mind lacked subtlety, Marinetti's was crude; his sophistication was of the shallowest and it was liberally streaked with vulgarity. Like Boccioni, Marinetti was vain and ambitious, although in a more casual, cavalier fashion. Above all he was in a hurry. He was also rich, and he had been about a good deal, and to Boccioni he seems to have appeared as some sort of glamorous, latter-day cultural *condottiere*. Within the space of a few months Marinetti had swept him, with a welter of half-formulated ideas and catchy slogans, technically totally unprepared, into the twentieth century.

Theoretically at least. The 'Manifesto of Futurist Painting' came out a year later, in February 1910, and was succeeded two months later by a second 'Technical' manifesto. Like almost all Futurist manifestos these were not documents that sought to promote or defend an existing body of work, rather they were blueprints for works that were about to be executed. Quite understandably Boccioni still had to draw visually on his earlier sources and the most important canvas of the first Futurist phase, 'La Città Sale' of 1910–11, although it is impressive, looks somewhat tame after the pyrotechnics of the manifestos; and after the passionate exaltation of the machine, it comes as something of a surprise to see the horse used

as a symbol of labour and a metaphor for progress. Iconographically and technically the painting still belongs to 1890s. But the initial manifesto itself contained a strong dose of *fin de siècle* symbolism which continued to pervade the movement throughout its duration. The horse was to remain a recurrent motif for Boccioni, and it was to prove, in 1916, the instrument of his death (he fell from his mount during a cavalry exercise).

'La Città Sale' was shown at the *Esposizione Libera* in Milan in May 1911, and it was the criticism of this exhibition which led, indirectly, to Boccioni's first encounter with Cubism, the pictorial style which was to modernize his art. He learnt about it first from reproductions of a set of rather heterogeneous works by various artists, some of them tangential to the movement, but he seems to have realized at once that here was the key to what he was now after. Subsequently, in the company of fellow Futurists, he visited Paris again in October 1911 and this time he homed in instantly on the most recent developments in Picasso's art. Severini took him to Picasso's studio and he certainly visited Kahnweiler's gallery. Calvesi mentions, somewhat enigmatically, the 'few' Cubist works seen there by Boccioni, but the gallery was full of them.

The effects can be seen in Boccioni's triptych, the *Stati d'animo*, which dominated the Futurist exhibition mounted at Bernheim, Jeune's in 1912, and which subsequently toured many European capitals. This was the most important of all Futurist exhibitions and it contained several other works which have since become classics of twentieth-century art. But a fairly large percentage of the work on view was of a lamentable standard. Because of the manifestos and the movement's ability to publicize itself the show attracted a lot of attention, and created a climate in which a lot of bad art appeared progressive, something which probably hadn't on the whole happened much before. The title of the triptych is derived from Bergson who had been a major source for many of the ideas in the early manifestos, most particularly the 'Technical Manifesto of Futurist Painting'. His thought has touched a multiplicity of artists but none of them used or exploited this philosopher as directly and systematically as Boccioni.

It is proof of Boccioni's intelligence that he so quickly saw what Cubism had to offer him. For a start it solved the problem of the middle ground. He used the linear grids of Cubism to structure the surfaces of his paintings, and he played them off to good effect against his

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earlier, swirling, Munchian rhythms. But he also saw how, taken in conjunction with the complexes of transparent, interacting planes which the Cubists suspended around these linear complexes to evoke sensations of volumetric form and space, they could be used to suggest spatial cells into which he could fit his protagonists and his objects so that the near and the far could be juxtaposed or even united without violating too drastically the surface integrity of the canvas. In his preface to the exhibition catalogue, Boccioni talks for the first time of "lines of force" and "battles of planes". It was a deliberate and in many ways a brilliant misinterpretation of Cubism. And yet the precariousness of the scaffolding on which his by now dashing and genuinely new vision was being erected is underlined by the fact that the iconography of the triptych, which is set in a contemporary railway station, and which consists of "Gli aditi", "Quelli che vanno" and "Quelli che restano", almost certainly goes back to memories of a work which by Futurist standards would have seemed pathetically *passatista*. In 1899, when Boccioni was a student in Padua, a triptych by Charles Cottet, a somewhat conservative, dark-toned painter of Breton subjects, had been installed there in the Museo Bottanini (now the Museo Civico). It was entitled *Les Pays de la Mer*, but the individual sections were labelled "Les Adieux", "Ceux qui restent" and "Ceux qui partent". Boccioni's ode to modern life doesn't look at all like Cottet, but with the knowledge of hindsight one can begin to hear this most modern of constructions begin to creak.

It is, however, when we look at Boccioni's activity as a sculptor that we can appreciate most clearly the workings of his mind. In a letter written in March of 1911 he says, "I am obsessed these days by sculpture. I think I can perceive a complete revival of this mummified art." In Paris a few months earlier he had looked around with an eye that was rapacious and beady and nothing if not competitive, and he had realized that there was as yet virtually no Cubist sculpture. There is a sense in which during the analytic phase of Cubism the painters' use of a multiple, rotative viewpoint, which allowed them to incorporate into a two-dimensional image information culled from looking at it from different angles and perspectives, had made sculpture (for them) temporarily redundant. Boccioni, as always, moved quickly. The "Technical Manifesto of Futurist Sculpture" is dated April 1912, although it wasn't published until October of that year. The first exhibition of his sculpture, which took place in Paris in 1913, included all but one of his known sculptural works. Of the works shown only three survive; the others, which existed only in gesso, were destroyed when they were left out in the rain after a subsequent showing. Fortunately photographs survive - although the Futurists inveighed against museums, critics and history, they loved to be catalogued and chronicled. One or two of the works seen in Paris may have been begun before the manifesto was written, but again, on the whole, theory preceded practice.

For his first three sculptures Boccioni turned to the most obvious and best of Cubist sources, to Picasso's work executed at Horta del Ebro during the summer of 1909, the most volumetrically full and explicit of his Cubist paintings; he almost certainly knew, even if only in reproduction, the bronze head which Picasso had executed on his return to Paris from Spain. The first two of Boccioni's pieces appear exciting but somewhat unsatisfactory, betraying their pictorial origins in that they are really elaborate bas-reliefs; the third and most resolved, "Antigrazioso", is also the most Picassian. But when we analyse Boccioni's subsequent sculptures in the light of his intentions as expressed in the manifesto the contradictions and the enormous gap between theory and practice begin to manifest themselves.

In the manifesto Boccioni had declared that the new sculpture would carry its own physical environment within it and would not merely stand out as a mass or silhouette in the spaces in which it might be placed; the architectural and urban around he had sought to bring through the first two sculptures is reduced in the "Antigrazioso" and following works to one or two abstract planes which bleed but also hold together the subjects like a simple, primary

armature. He had suggested the use of exciting new combinations of unlikely materials and mediums to counter the traditional use of marble and bronze, but from the "Antigrazioso" onwards (with the exception of a single isolated final sculpture) he worked in gesso with a view towards casting in metal. From the first he had spoken out against a cinematic depiction of motion but he had used chronophotography as a source for one of the panels of his great triptych, and he relied on it very heavily in the two large, destroyed plasters that lead up to the most important of all the sculptures, the "Unique Forms of Continuity in Space"; characteristically he had offered to bring back this final



Boccioni's "Unique Forms of Continuity in Space".

work for exhibition in Italy but only on condition that his friend Bragaglia's photographs of figures in motion be excluded from the proposed show: there was some truth in the joke made by one critic of the first Futurist exhibition at the Bernheim Jeune gallery that the participants' campaign to destroy museums was the result of their desire to suppress the evidence. In the sculpture manifesto Boccioni had attacked traditional ways of presenting sculpture, but contemporary photographs show that he liked his work to be raised quite high on ordinary plinths or bases; and in the case of the "Unique Forms" there is something more than a little frightening in the concept of this savage Futurist demigod striding slightly over in an audience which Boccioni describes in a contemporary letter as "scum whom we must lead into slavery".

In November of 1912 Boccioni had descended on Paris yet again to see what could be raided from the sculpture studios there - a guerrilla attack that had produced disappointing results for him. And this leads us to the recognition of an important point. Of all early twentieth-century modernists Boccioni was one of the very few who never felt the impact of primitive art; and its attraction for his French colleagues and contemporaries baffled him but also enabled him to treat their submission to such an influence with contempt. It is in his activity as a sculptor that the unwilling recognition of an affinity and debt to the Italian Baroque and the later styles of the classical past becomes clear. In the manifesto he had proclaimed the advent of a sculpture which would rely only on straight lines, but these he abandoned almost at once, and the best and most fully realized of his sculptures are centrifugal odes to the spiral; one of the pencil and pen sketches that relates most closely to the "Unique Forms" shows its muscular configurations given feminine attributes and unmistakably turned into a Daphne figure sprouting foliage from its limbs. The armless torso of the great bronze and the wavy, flame-like flanges drawn back from the sturdy legs evoke memories and echoes of the wet, fluttering draperies of Hellenistic art. In a strange but very real sense here the roaring automobile and the Victory of Samothrace have come together in unholy wedlock.

The paintings executed by Boccioni between 1912 and 1914 were his strongest and best. In the autumn of 1912 he had travelled to Munich for the installation and opening of the big, mixed show of painting, virtually the same exhibition that had opened in Paris nine months earlier. He seems to have felt happier and more relaxed there than in Paris, and his

appreciation of Kandinsky manifested itself in his adoption of a richer, more sonorous and orchestrated palette, and in a new, freer, surging use of line. But Cubism went on bothering him. He realized not only that it had set his own work off on a new and original path, but also that it represented a turning point in the history of art. He appears also to have realized that he didn't fully understand it; he had used it, had thought he might be able to influence or divert its course, but it had flowed on past him, acknowledging his impact with little more than a surface ripple. It is testimony to his seriousness and acuity that he felt he must get back to the movement's sources. From a study of Picasso's work of 1909 he moved backwards in time to have a look at the pre-Cubist, negroid work. By 1915 he had found his way further back still to Cubism's major source - to Cézanne and to his formalistically oriented art of the 1880s and 1890s. Within the space of less than five years the art of one of the most naturally gifted and self-avowedly revolutionary artists of the age had executed, often with brilliance and bravado, a complete volte-face.

It is good to have this *catalogue raisonné* and it will remain the starting point for all future studies of Boccioni. It illustrates 959 works as against the 300-odd in Bruno's hastily thrown together *L'Opera completa di Boccioni* of 1969, and the 608 postage-stamp reproductions at the back of Ballo's monograph of 1964. A major discovery has been a cache of hitherto unknown early drawings of the Roman period, and if these don't alter our picture of the artist's development they confirm his early gifts as a draftsman. The catalogue is divided up into the various periods and phases of the career and these are linked by short, sensible texts telling of his movements and charting in general terms the evolution of his style. The notes attached to individual works are full and extremely helpful, although the external influences on many of the mature and later works are not discussed or acknowledged. No 883, for example, is based directly on a photograph of Picasso's "Bather" or "Dryad" of 1908, now in Russia, and No 919 (almost certainly a work of 1912 and not 1914) on the same artist's "Femme à la Mandoline" ("Fanny Tellier") of 1910. The model for No 773 is Gris's early portrait of his mother. One could go on. The Italianate sources for the earlier works, on the other hand, are fully discussed. The Index lists only proper names (not even titles of paintings) and Cottet doesn't find his way into it. Given the fullness and general excellence of the catalogue entries, it is a pity to find the "general" bibliography disappointing even as such.

Calvesi has long been at the forefront of studies in twentieth-century Italian art and he has, as one would expect, much wisdom and information to impart. His text consists, in effect, of a series of essays or papers on different aspects of Boccioni's work and on some of the problems that arise from a study of it. He has new things to say about the Roman period, and he is particularly convincing on Boccioni's debt and relationship to Previati. His juxtapositions of fragments of Boccioni's texts with extracts from Engels, whose influence on Boccioni he convinces us has hitherto been underrated, is startling: although the impact of the confrontation is somewhat blunted by the fact that Engels's *Dialektika della natura* was not published in Italian until 1925. But there is a sense in which Calvesi knows his subject almost too well. Perhaps he has been through the basic material so often that new ideas and small new pieces of information receive an undue importance. The possible influences of Corinth and Selevogt and certain similarities which he now sees between some early Boccioni and the work of Kollwitz seem to interest him more than the artist's first contacts with Marinetti. The momentous 1911 trip to Paris gets short shrift. The detailed analysis of some of the various manifestos is valuable, and is handled with perception and learning, but inevitably their dissection deprives them of the feeling of urgency and excitement which they can still generate. For the most part the Futurists (and certainly Boccioni) tended to take the view that they who hesitate are lost, and I think that on the whole we can best appreciate and enjoy their products if we take them in at the same pace at which they were produced.

## On the global campus

Blake Morrison

DAVID LODGE

Small World: An Academic Romance  
339pp. Secker and Warburg. £8.95.  
0 436 25663 0

First there was one campus, located in a drab provincial town, home of much moral earnestness and tawdry comedy. Then came a second campus in the United States, a euphoria to which the English academic could flee to savour unconventional freedoms. Now comes the global campus with its international conferences, its polyglot discourse, its scholars who spend more time on board aeroplanes than in classrooms (last week was Semiotics in Amsterdam so today must be Narrative in Vienna). David Lodge evokes the "small world" of the global campus with such authority that it begins to seem as if the whole of post-war campus fiction - *Lucky Jim*, *One Fat Englishman*, *Stepping Westward*, *The History Man*, and so on - had been evolving towards it.

Lodge himself understands the development of campus fiction better than anyone, though he has never himself written "the single, static campus novel", unless you count *The British Museum is Falling Down*, set in London. Nine years ago, however, in *Changing Places*, he wrote "a tale of two campuses" (the novel's subtitle), taking the job-exchange of a pair of literary academics, the dowdy Englishman Philip Swallow and the flamboyant American Morris Zapp, as the perfect vehicle to examine transatlantic differences in morality, politics (the setting was 1969) and the teaching of English literature. *Small World* brings us Zapp and Swallow again, but the year is 1979, the protagonists are nearer fifty than forty, and both have become old hands at international travel. Zapp is fond of pointing out that he typifies a "revolution" which has taken place in academic life: scholars do their work not by studying books in libraries but by reading Xeroxes in airport and hotel lounges; posts are secured by recruitment at MLA and other conferences; students and term-time are the dull intervals between the real business of putting a girle round about the earth.

To academics up and down the many countries Lodge describes in *Small World*, not least those in Thatcher-trimmed British universities, this vision of perpetual conference-hopping at faculty or government expense may sound fantastic and even rather cruelly offensive; perhaps it was briefly different in 1979, but in 1984 the globetrotting academic seems scarcely less an exception to the rule than he did twenty years ago when Philip Larkin announced his arrival in "Naturally the Foundation Will Bear Your Expenses". But then *Small World* is not exactly a realistic novel: subtitled "An Academic Romance", it invokes Hawthorne to indicate that "a certain latitude" (ie, considerable suspension of disbelief) must

be expected. The new campus demands a new literary form: *Changing Places*, being a novel of the "static campus" (albeit two campuses) was comedy written in the classical realist tradition, with Jane Austen, Richardson and the epistolary novel much alluded to. *Small World* requires a more mobile genre: it is a book of convergences and coincidences, and its characters share a professional interest in "a pre-novelistic kind of narrative. It's full of adventure and coincidence and surprises and marvels, and has lots of characters who are lost or enchanted or wandering about looking for each other."

There are, indeed, "lots of characters", though none with the solidity of the four we already know from *Changing Places*. Zapp, it is good to see, dresses as loudly as ever and, though he has taken up jogging and switched allegiance from Northrop Frye and archetypes to Roland Barthes and post-structuralist encodings, still smokes those large phallic cigars. The shabby Swallow clings to his amateurish faith that what critics need primarily is "love of books", a discredited position but no more discredited than it was ten years before, and one, indeed, which earns him unlikely, fashionable prominence as the notional head of "The English School of Criticism". Désirée, Morris's ex-wife, has had Erica Jong-like success with the men-bashing *Difficult Days* but is now suffering from writer's block. Hilary, Swallow's wife, is more than ever ensnared in domesticity. For the rest we must make do with caricatures - or, to be more generous, with the stock-types of a Grail romance: Perry McGarrigle, a wistful troubadour-academic from Limerick; Angelica, the beautiful and guileful doctorate student who eludes him, not to be confused with her identical happy hooker twin, Lily; Miss Maiden, oracular scholar-spinster, still hooked on *The Golden Bough*; trend-hungry academic publishers; angry no-longer-young men; computer-addicted Eng Lit lecturers; and a large and largely villainous cast of international academics competing for the newly-created Unesco Chair of Literary Criticism. "Signments of the imagination" the preface assures us, but not so much so that one can't put names to the pseudonyms.

Aspiring as it does to the condition of romance, which Angelica describes as an "invaginated mode", that comes and goes like "a multiple orgasm", the story of *Small World* follows a digressive, looping course; though there is a double-Grail - the struggle for the Unesco Chair, and McGarrigle's pursuit of Angelica - to provide interest of a firm, linear (phallic-narrative?) kind, what interests Lodge is the opportunity to explore and exploit generic motifs. There's much allusion to other romances and studies of romance: the French chivalric tradition, *Troilus and Criseyde*, "The Eve of St Agnes", Tennyson's *Idylls*, *The Waste Land*, Jessie Weston's *From Ritual to Romance*, Mills and Boon. The porno-underworld of Soho and Amsterdam is examined in

ironic juxtaposition to the Romantic canon ("Keats it was not"). Comparisons are made between Chaucer's pilgrims and modern academics, who have "all the pleasures and diversions of travel while appearing to be entirely bent on self-improvement". Standard emblems are incorporated: lost children, mistaken identities, twins, birthmarks, disguises and metamorphoses. There are tales within tales, like Swallow's affair with Joy, which teaches him that he's "too old to be a romantic hero". Even Morris's cigars are called Romeo y Julietas. And though the humour stays light and the novel ends as affirmatively as a Shakespearean comedy, there are hints of a more sombre underlying theme: romance is a genre depicting the search to gratify desire, and the academic questers in *Small World* are profoundly restless and ungratified. However enchanted the domain, there's a deep disenchantment at the heart of Lodge's fiction.

As all this suggests, *Small World* is a meticulously organized novel, and the logic of its design disarms most of the criticisms that might be made of it. To say that the characters aren't fully realized or that the events are unconvincing would be to miss the point. Even the lacklustre opening section, which retails bad old jokes about English universities (poor food, poor accommodation, awful lectures) can be justified as a gesture towards an earlier tradition of (provincial) campus fiction from which the rest will (globally) depart. Whether the rest succeeds in being a departure is, however, questionable. Compared to, say, Angela Carter, Lodge is less than wholehearted about exploring the supernatural possibilities of romance: he wants the licence of convergence and coincidence, but is reluctant to venture any further outside the realist tradition. Indeed at many points the book merely adds slight twists to the stock situations of a campus fiction. Lodge has written before: the mislaid or damaged lecture-script (Swallow, taken short during a power-cut in Turkey, mistakes his type-

script for toilet paper); the L. S. Caton-like academic fraud (here Von Turpitz, who plagiarizes passages from a book which he recommended be turned down for publication); the howlers to be found on examination papers (here committed by lecturers, whose sexual misdemeanours have led students to insert blackmail demands into their answers). *Small World*, in other words, is as much academic satire as romantic comedy. And though the caricatures of international academics have some excellent moments, few of the jokes are as funny as they might be, or as funny as they have been in earlier Lodge novels. For example, there's surely nothing comic any more about sending an embarrassed young man into a shop to buy Durex and sending him out again with a packet of Farex, even if (structurally) you can justify the scene as a deliberate anachronism suitable to the depiction of an old-fashioned hero.

No one who has read both could fail to notice that large parts of Lodge's novel - the fascination with airports and air-travel, the theme of a dowdy British Council academic set loose in a "pluralistic" culture, even the idea of a heroine whose speciality is fairytale and romance - were anticipated in Malcolm Bradbury's novel of last year, *Rates of Exchange*. Indeed the two novelists feel relaxed enough about their confusingly similar careers to make jokes about it themselves. Bradbury's novel describing a campus writer called Bodge, author of *Changing Westward*, and Lodge's incorporating a similarly self-conscious (though updated) joke. If the flatness and looseness of much of the prose in *Small World* gives one renewed respect for the tighter, more energetic writing of *Rates of Exchange*, the former's ease, warmth and amiability make it an enjoyable enough read (and for the employees of cut-back British universities a wildly escapist one too). Zapp and Swallow are no doubt due for a few years' sabbatical now, but it would be a pity to have to wait to see them back in action.

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RICHARD STRIER

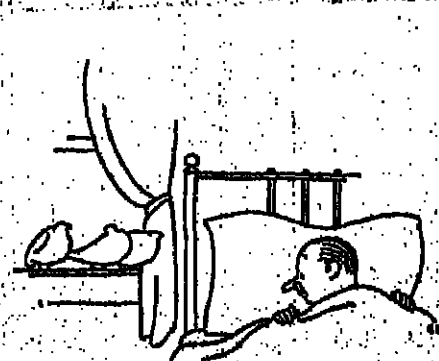
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## Cub

I had believed myself fairly inured to foolishness after 6 months for Reuter's in parched mad bloody Lebanon, but

leaving the hotel that morning (with Dickie Pratt, of the Mirror), in the main street of Sidon, I was presented with this:

out from the shade of the shelled former Admin. Offices stepped a miniature, wielding a huge glinting black muzzle and stock,

just as a fat juicy jeep of Israelis swung into vision. Three or four seconds he stood, sputtering hail at the jeep -

windscreen-glass frosted and one of the front seat occupants oozed red, there was a crackle of fire, ten or so seconds, and then.

as from a colander, into the pavement streamed out the juices of the assailant, a slight soldier/homunculus. Well,

nobody looks for a *motif* from these Old Testament shitters - thick hate is still in the genes. I learned the boy was aged 12.

PETER READING



## Keeping it short

J. I. M. Stewart

RICHARD LITTLE PURDY and MICHAEL MILLGATE (Editors)  
The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy  
Volume IV, 1909-1913  
337pp. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £21.  
0198126212

There are over 700 letters here, most of them previously unpublished. But what is a letter? The Revd Stanhope Ward is sent a postcard saying "Many thanks for copy of the Fairy Tales received", and the editors—unflinching as always—have discovered that the book was called *The Ivory Mouse*. John Lane gets "Yes, will sign petition", and Macmillan & Co get "Mr Thomas Hardy has left London for Max Gate/Dorchester/Dorset". To call these "letters" is certainly to stretch a point, yet we must not quarrel with the inclusion of such brevities. The most laconic may hold significance. In the previous volume we hear of a picture postcard of the Parade at Aldeburgh, sent by Hardy to his younger sister, Kate, with the three words "Fine weather. Windy." Now she gets the Parade again, and the message is "Fine and sunny till yesterday: now foggy". Another from Aldeburgh says "Very quiet here", and from both Cromer and Felixstowe comes "Here for the day". But Southwold prompts to an unwanted communicativeness: "Arrived yesterday evening. Am sleeping at Swan Hotel. Leave here for Aldeburgh Friday afternoon . . .". At Christmas, 1913, Hardy resigns expatiation to others, himself merely writing "T.H. to K.H." on what we are told is a Christmas card bearing the printed message "For Old Time's Sake" and a poem entitled "Christmas" beginning "The good old days, the dear old days/Must have been more than sweet, / There were so many happy ways / For hearts and hands to meet". To his elder sister, Mary, Hardy had been very close during boyhood, and her death will later affect him strongly. But at this Christmas Mary gets only a picture postcard of Stinford Church, with "T.H. to M.H." written on it. During the five years covered by the volume Mary has also received one "Fine weather" postcard, and twenty-five words during that loquacious fit at Southwold. Hardy, we know, had largely yielded to the insistence of his first wife, Emma, that he should have as little as possible to do with the humble folk among whom he had been bred, so he was constrained to pack a great deal of feeling into a "T.H. to M.H." or a few printed lines of sentimental verse.

Of Hardy's literary taste and judgments, in relation both to his own work and that of others, there is a good deal, but comparatively little of it is new. There is, in fact, much that is downright dull, although seldom without a glint here and there of Hardy's inner mind. Even to his intimates, who are few, he is reticent about his domestic situation in the face of Emma's madness or near-madness. "Embarrassing circumstances" preclude his inviting Edward Clodd to stay at Max Gate; Maurice Hewlett is told that "personal & unavoidable" reasons exist for his declining the Presidency of the Society of Authors. Of his *post mortem* obsession with his disastrous marriage, and of the imaginative excitement which was to issue in *Poems 1912-1913*, there is little on show. Emma dies; he is much struck by her having died so suddenly; but mourning stationery is to hand, and he writes what is proper. Later, he is to tell Rider Haggard that "the strange thing is that the gap caused by such a loss becomes more apparent & grievous after a few months have passed than it seems at first". It is odd that this should have presented itself as a discovery to the author of "The Slow Nature".

On marriage, in general, there are several characteristically disparaging asides. Tennyson contrived an "awful anticlimax" in ending *In Memoriam* "with a highly respectable middle class wedding", and woman-suffrage is commended on the obscure ground that it will enable men "to strike out honestly right and left" at such "superstitious institutions" as "theologies, marriage, wealth-worship, labour-worship, hypocritical optimism, & so on . . . without showing unwholesome meanness". But a second marriage is now dead ahead of Hardy himself (Elinor Dugdale, his third wife, died in 1912), and the volume ends with a letter to his daughter, Florence, written in 1913, in which he says "I am glad to hear that you are well and happy, and that you are still a member of the Church of England".

is well to the fore throughout the volume. She is regularly "my young friend" or "my young friend and assistant", she is "very delicate", and she is by no means to be thought of as a typist. In one letter she becomes "my little cousin F" and from another we learn with some surprise that "her family & mine have known each other for centuries". The marriage takes place within three months of Emma's death, and ten days after the present volume concludes. Hardy is seventy-three; he will live to be eighty-seven; there are three more volumes of letters to come.



## With the pen-pushers

Jonathan Keates

JEROME K. JEROME  
My Life and Times  
250pp. John Murray. £9.50.  
0719540895

The opening scene of Jerome K. Jerome's *My Life and Times*, with perfect innocence, sets the tone for the rest of the book. At midnight in Pagan's restaurant, Great Portland Street, at some unspecified date before the First World War, a collection of second-rank men of letters, having feasted in the first-floor front off a two-shilling dinner with Chianti at 1s 4d the half flask, are discussing, variously, God and perambulators when Pagan himself turns off the gas as a hint that he wishes to go to bed. The company, which includes Swinburne, Barrie and Marx's son-in-law Edward Aveling, sets off to finish the evening in the rooms of a blind poet called Philip Bourke Marston in the Euston Road, pausing on the way to consider the question of whether, or not to ask Bernard Shaw, living in Fitzroy Square, to join them. But nobody can recall the number of the house and "the chances were a hundred to one that, even if we ever got there, Shaw wouldn't come down, but would throw his boot at the first man who opened the door".

This atmosphere of tweedy pen-pushing in the parlours of W1, among people helpfully labelled "the dramatist", "the novelist" and "the actress", is kept up till the last, as a series of names more familiar nowadays from the bargain shelves of second-hand bookshops flashes by: "Marie Corelli I came to know while living in Chelsea", "Arthur Machen married a dear friend of mine, a Miss Flogg", "Zangwill used to be keen on croquet", "Henry Arthur Jones's brother had the flat beneath us".

Such a world of dining clubs, magazine serials, cheap living in foreign cities and plentiful railway travel was what nurtured Harris, George and their creator, and it is hard to imagine the pug-nosed, porkpie-hatted, Clapham omnibus figure staring at us from the dust-jacket as flourishing in any other context. Jerome's, even by his own account, was not an especially interesting or eventful life. Born in Walsall, the son of a near-do-well coal-powderer with a turn for chapel preaching and a Welsh wife, he was long dead, like Claps the Dane and Henry Arthur Jones's brother, before the First World War.

## Golden, with flaws

Victoria Glendinning

JOANNA COLEBRANDER  
A Portrait of Fryn: A biography of  
F. Tennyson Jesse  
305pp. Deutsch. £12.95.  
0233975721

F. Tennyson Jesse, born in 1888 and at the peak of success as a writer in the 1920s and '30s, had thought of calling her unfinished memoirs "The Half-Open Door". It would have been an apt title for this biography by Joanna Colebrander, her last secretary and confidante. Her book is amply researched and documented—sometimes too amply, including as it does an unwarranted amount of information about the lives of her subject's distant relatives, employees and friends. She conveys with warmth the charismatic charm of F. Tennyson Jesse (who was born Wynfrid, which was playfully converted to Friniwyd, then to Fryn); the first time they met, Fryn seemed to "pulse with warmth and light". Years earlier, Fryn's publisher William Heinemann had called her his "golden lass"; Rebecca West remembered her as "ideally beautiful", and everyone who was fond of her bore witness to her "radiant spirit" and "golden aura".

But there was a darker side, inherited perhaps from the "black-blooded Tennysons"—the laureate was Fryn's great-uncle. Mrs Colebrander writes of the "incalculable" flaw that marred Fryn's personality; but, though she charts the history of drug-dependence, alcoholism, suicide attempts and paranoid despair, it is with a seeming unease. The flaw remains "incalculable" because uncalculated. The author lacks the language and perhaps the

temperament to enter fully into Fryn's private hell, and has recourse to breezy superficialities: "All the hideous pother of stomach pumps and prostration followed." This, it must be said, mirrors Fryn's own astonishing resilience—she lived until 1958—just as Mrs Colebrander's nursery usages such as "botty" and "potty" echo the baby-talk used by Fryn and her actress sister Stella ("No monny, darling" for "Don't complain") and Fryn's usual designation of herself as "your little friend". But the result of only half-comprehending the disaster areas in Fryn's life is that we do precisely seem to be peering through a "half-open door"; the best argument for candid, even for "intrusive" biography is that the half-seen seems so infinitely more disturbing than anything that is fully examined.

Fryn's father was an invalid high-church clergyman, a "sweet and silly" man who spent most of his life doing locum jobs in foreign parts with pleasant climates—partly for his asthma's sake, and partly to get away from Fryn's mother, who suffered from migraine and religiosity. Mother, who was keen on "purity", inspired protective, romantic feelings in other women; Fryn inherited this talent, and as a working adult was rarely without a surrounding nimbus of devoted, put-upon female secretaries, companions, nurses and ministering angels. She also inherited the migraine.

At eighteen Fryn entered a lyrical rustic bohemia, the Newlyn School of Painting in Cornwall. She had some success as an artist before becoming a writer; she designed the dust-jacket for Henry James's *Daisy Miller*. It is a pity that no examples of her work are illustrated. She had early success in Fleet Street, and wrote for the *English Review* as well as *The Times* and *Mail*. Blonde and brilliant, she found patronage and recognition in high places. Her novel *The Milky Way*, the first of nine, was published in 1913. She also wrote poetry, non-fiction and plays, some in collaboration with the successful West End playwright and producer H. M. Harwood, whom she married in 1918.

The marriage began oddly. "Tottie" Harwood, a charmer like herself, had a mistress who was married, but who had borne him a son. This lady—who remains anonymous here—kept her own marriage intact; nevertheless, for her sake Harwood insisted on his marriage to Fryn being kept secret for three years. On the anniversary of their wedding, he sent Fryn away early because he was expecting the other woman to dinner. Fryn suffered a major nervous collapse, and the incident became, not surprisingly, an obsession with her, resurfacing whenever she was "eclipsed" by self-destructive depression. Another source of obsessional grief was her inability to have a child.

Before this, her right hand had been severely mutilated in an accident with a propeller, and it was to dull the pain that she was prescribed morphia, and became addicted. In her bad phases she would be unpredictable, aggressive, impossible to deal with. In one black period the nurse-companion who administered the injections was herself an alcoholic. Serious strains were put on the marriage even after it was happily made "official". Yet Fryn's talents were unimpaired. She added criminology to the list of her interests, and among her best books are *Murder and its Motives* and *A Pin to See the Peppercorn*, which was based on the Edith Thompson case; this novel, with *The Lacquer Lady* ("The novel by which I should live") and *Moonraker*, a sea story, have been reissued by Virago.

In the good times Fryn was spontaneously generous, hospitable, responsive, witty and "golden"; she adored her husband and he loved her. In their last years they settled in St John's Wood, withdrawing affectionately into each other's eccentric company, their equally eccentric physical needs attended to by relays of understanding acolytes. After Fryn died, her bed-ridden husband talked to Mrs Colebrander about "the wonderful, wonderful life we had, she and I". It was his wish that Mrs Colebrander should undertake *A Portrait of Fryn*, and in doing so she has preserved that paradoxical but indisputable truth. One is left with a jumbled but powerful impression of flowers, fun, typewriters, gin, prescriptions, synapses, yachts, women's voices, black ink, and courage.

## Heirs of antiquity

Juliet Du Boulay

MICHAEL HERZFELD  
Ours Once More: Folklore, Ideology, and the Making of Modern Greece  
197pp. University of Texas Press. £14.95.  
292760183

Hellenism—the interpretation of European civilization in terms of its origins in Classical Greece—has had enormous influence, not only over the course of education in Western Europe but also over the self-awareness of the Greeks themselves since their War of Independence. Ironically, though, it was an idea which, far from being generated spontaneously within Greece, was an essentially foreign notion, derived from the Renaissance interest in the Hellenistic world, guided by the values of humanism and the Enlightenment, and reflected back on to the Greek-speaking subjects of the Ottoman Empire by European scholars and by the influence of the European schools on well-to-do Greeks such as Korais and Korydaleus. The later development of this theme is here investigated, in miniature as it were, by examining the relation of Hellenism to the development of folklore studies in the hundred years which followed Independence.

Michael Herzfeld sets the scene in the first chapter: there was from the beginning a close relationship between the study of *laography*, or folklore, in Greece, and the political ideology by which the nation was constituted; for in constituting this national identity Greece found itself virtually compelled, after the achievement of Independence, to prove itself a valid client for the patronage of the Great Powers—and the validity lay in proving the present inhabitants of the country to be the legitimate heirs of classical antiquity, and thus true citizens of Europe. The search for Hellenic antecedents in the life of the people, then, was undertaken with a patriotic conviction, and Dr Herzfeld examines the way in which the oral traditions of the Greek people were searched for proofs of a Hellenic identity—the texts purged of their undesirable overtones, the Klephts isolated as a heroic and representative Greek category as opposed to post-Independence brigands on the one hand and to Bulgarian bandits on the other, and a system of classification built up through which the discipline of *laography* was formed and through which, Herzfeld argues, the "self-fulfilling" prophecy of continuity from the ancient world was given more and more substance. The final central figure in Herzfeld's study—Politics—thus emerges as the champion of this prophecy, linking folklore with politics and lending the weight of his discipline to the territorial aspirations expressed in The Great Idea—the hope of regaining lands once held in the Byzantine Empire—which was to end in the Asia Minor catastrophe and the exchange of populations in 1922.

In teasing out this ideological element, Herzfeld relies first on the folklorists' own commentaries, and second, on the selectivity

now evident in the editing of their collections. The commentaries reveal the ingenious re-interpretation by Greek folklorists of the evolutionary theories of Victorians like Tylor, with his assumption that folklore was essentially a kind of crystallized survival, an artefact to be dated to some archaeological stratum in human history: while preserving the archaeological approach, the Hellenists tacitly overturned the notion of development from primitive stages, replacing it with the idea of national continuity. To see how this affected their editing, Herzfeld then has to piece together a number of fragments of evidence, in themselves often relatively slight, but building up into an intriguing picture of the signal political significance which some folklore materials came to possess, and throwing into relief the famous lament for the fall of Constantinople, and the construing of the final line so as to prophesy that the city would be, in Herzfeld's title phrase, "Ours once more".

Two interesting and interrelated questions are raised by his study which, because of the fidelity with which he sticks to his central theme, he does not, I think, fully answer. Several mentions are made of the problems faced by a nation which owed to the Church its continued identity under Ottoman rule, but which was now embracing a cultural theory deeply involved in paganism: but except for one attempted accommodation between these potential opposites by Zambelios, little material emerges to explain why the national identity provided by the Church since the fall of Constantinople should have been so unproblematically yoked to the pagan past. That identity was, in fact, more fully captured in the notion of *Romaiosyni* (a designation of the Greeks as the heirs of Constantinople, the New Rome)—a concept used by the peasants of themselves and their language, and far more embedded in their own texts than that of the mythical Hellenes. Herzfeld describes in some detail this internal opposition to the Hellenist thesis, but because of his close focus on the folklorists and their predominant interest in Hellenism, the capacity of the demotic tradition to provide a viable Romaic alternative is not really explored. Yet not only a minority of folklorists, but also literati in fields as diverse as poetry, the novel, and political theory, all found it possible to be subscribers to the demotic cause, and this raises the question why some should have fallen so totally under the thrall of Hellenism and the necessity to placate foreign opinion, while others did not.

Even though this book deals with its central themes within fairly precise limits, it is packed with illuminating detail; and its interest is not confined solely to the area of folklore since, as the author rightly suggests, the attitudes which emerge in the context of this argument are also of more general significance. Apart from documenting a fascinating story of the reciprocal influence of politics and scholarship in the last century, the book throws an always sympathetic and often humorous light on many aspects of the thinking of the Greeks about themselves in the present day.

## Heard in the Himalayas

John A. C. Greppin

DZIHOTI EDELMAN  
The Dardic and Nuristani Languages  
Translated by E. H. Tsjipen  
344pp. Moscow: Nauka. 2.50 roubles.

This Soviet study of the Dardic and Nuristani languages, spoken in Afghanistan, northern India and Pakistan, is only one in an impressive series of linguistic monographs published by the Institute of Oriental Studies of the USSR Academy of Sciences. The series, begun nearly twenty-five years ago, has come to include studies of such diverse languages as Uighur, a Turkic language of Central Asia; the language of the Chinese Yin inscriptions of the late second millennium BC; many African languages, such as Wolof, Yoruba and Hausa; the abundant but little studied languages of eastern Asia; as well as some of the languages of the Pacific Islands, such as Papuan and Hawaiian. To a large extent these languages are spoken in areas where the Soviet Union has a keen strategic interest, and many inconspicuous cultures are deeply flattered to see a scholarly interest shown in their languages; the Soviets are by no means unaware of the political value of such monographs.

Dzihoti Edelman discusses the Nuristani languages, all of which find their homes in the Afghan valleys of the Hindu Kush, the mountain range which is the westernmost extension of the Himalayas. The Nuristani people are undeniably remote, so remote in fact that they maintained their traditional shamanistic religion well into the nineteenth century, a millennium after the surrounding area of the sub-continent, Iran, and Central Asia had become keen and enthusiastic believers in Islam. It is for this reason that the languages now called Nuristani were once called Kafiri, after the Arabic *kafir*, meaning "infidel", from the root *kafara* "to deny". But, as we are informed, now they are firm believers they find their old designation most distasteful, hence the modern term Nuristani.

The principal Nuristani languages are Kuti, Waigali, Ashkun and Prasun, all of which are divided into several dialects. Edelman quotes a 1981 census that estimates the total Nuristani population at 120,000 speakers. There is, however, no established literary language and the Nuristani people must make their way in writing by using Dari or Pashto, the more prominent Iranian languages of Afghanistan. Yet literacy in the Nuristani languages is approaching and the favoured script is the Arabo-Persian, an alphabet, alas, hardly suited to the rigours of languages that have as many as sixty separate consonants. Yet in spite of the immediate difficulties, the newly acquired Islamic tradition of the Nuristani requires the Arabic script and we must prepare ourselves for the sinuous Arabic lines interrupted by dots above and below the line in a profusion hitherto unseen.

These languages differ considerably from the Indo-Iranian system they are generally related to. While in the Indic languages there is

an abundance of *hs* in inconvenient places (*ghee, Buddha, brahman*), no such aspiration ever appears in the Nuristani. As to syntax, they lack the ergative, which competes with the nominative to express the subject for transitive verbs in modern Indic and Iranian languages, but which is lacking except as a primitive genetic code in the earliest known level of Indo-Iranian, and most uncommon elsewhere among Indo-European languages.

This surprising difference was strenuously emphasized by the Norwegian scholar, Georg Morgenstierne, who also pointed to telling archaisms in the historical development of the Nuristani phonological system as part of quite a strong argument for viewing the Nuristani languages, in spite of their similarity to the Indo-Iranian group, as a separate family. There is good reason to think that the Nuristani's separation occurred before the Indo-Iranian separation, and thus reflects an earlier invasion into the sub-continent. The Nuristani were later followed by the Indo-Iranian group, which apparently was more powerful and vigorous, and drove the Nuristani into the mountain fastnesses which are the usual retreat of the less powerful when threatened by a more effective culture—witness the Basques of Europe, pushed into the mountains by the Indo-European culture that began invading in the third millennium BC. Edelman cautiously sides with Morgenstierne and sees the Nuristani languages as a separate branch of the Indo-European system.

Not so the Dardic languages, which are her chief interest. Here her views are largely her own, for these are the languages she has specialized in. The Dardic languages, the best known of which is Kashmiri, with 2.8 million speakers, have idiosyncrasies which distinguish them from Indic languages. Edelman considers both the Dardic and Nuristani languages to be part of a chain the mid-section of which is Dardic, spoken in a single village in the Chitral area. For all Edelman's authority, as perhaps the world's foremost specialist on the Dardic languages, some would disagree with her concerning the relationship of Dardic and Nuristani in general, and on the role of Dameli in particular. The more conservative opinion is that the Dardic languages are clearly part of the Indic system, but were early cut off from its mainstream, an assumption made logical by their isolation in the northern reaches of the sub-continent. Not is Dameli necessarily a link between Nuristani and Dardic, but rather either an Indic language heavily influenced through contact by the Nuristani languages, or, conversely, a Nuristani language heavily influenced by Indic. Kashmiri has clear Indic features: the existence of a robust aspirate series, *th, kh, chh*, etc., and an intriguing ergative which Edelman describes with care, and the other Dardic languages are full of similarities.

Edelman altogether discusses twenty separate languages, quite a feat in itself; remarkable indeed when we consider how hard of access they are. These are indeed peculiar tongues; languages collected by specialists and, like rare birds, all the more attractive for their obscurity.

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# The gang of six

## Archie Brown

ROY MEDVEDEV  
All Stalin's Men  
Translated by Harold Shukman  
184pp. Oxford: Blackwell. £8.95.  
0 631 13348 8

Three of the "Stalin's men" of the title are now united in death with the millions of Stalin's victims: three are still alive, though of a great age, and occasionally there are difficult encounters on Moscow streets as survivors of Stalin's camps recognize one of those who sent them there. All six men spent long years at the top of the Soviet hierarchy, were close to Stalin and share, in varying degrees, responsibility for the extremes of injustice and arbitrariness characteristic of the epoch. The three who were dead are Marshall Kliment Voroshilov, Anastas Mikoyan and Mikhail Suslov. The three who are still alive are Vyacheslav Molotov (who is now ninety-four), Lazar Kaganovich (now ninety) and Georgiy Malenkov (a mere eighty-two). Of the six, only Mikoyan emerges with a modicum of credit from Medvedev's account.

Though Khrushchev's memoirs remain the best single source on the personalities of most of Stalin's senior henchmen, Roy Medvedev has made good use of other memoirs as well and has supplemented this material with facts drawn from his conversations with surviving old Bolsheviks and other Soviet citizens whose paths had crossed with one or other of "Stalin's men". The book is well-informed and instructive and, in Harold Shukman's very fluent translation, should appeal to a readership much broader than that of Soviet specialists. Medvedev himself believes that the lesson to be drawn from his brief accounts of these long lives is that "democratic mechanisms and institutions must be created in the Soviet Union that will ensure that people like Stalin and most of those around him can never again hold power or assume control of the country".

Overall assessments of these six partners and heirs of Stalin are unlikely to require modification in the light of Medvedev's work. The picture that emerges conforms in general outline with that painted in the memoirs of Khrushchev and the former Yugoslav ambassador to Moscow, Veljko Micanovic (the latter a useful source unavailable to Medvedev), and with that to be found in Western scholarship.

Voroshilov appears in his familiar role as a man of limited ability but inordinate craving for fame and honour who, as People's Commissar for Defence, aided and abetted Stalin in the physical destruction of a high proportion of the Soviet army's officer corps just a few years before Hitler launched his attack on the Soviet Union. Since Stalin and his aides had beaten Hitler to it, some of the "best elements" of the Soviet army and navy died (in Medvedev's words) "not on the battlefield but in the cellars of the Lubyanka and other prisons and concentration camps". During the war Voroshilov acted bravely but incompetently and his advice was brusquely rejected by, among others, the outstanding Soviet military commander, Marshal Zhukov.

Since, however, the truth about incompetence and criminality in the Stalin leadership, which had begun to be told in Khrushchev's time, gave way to silence on such matters after Khrushchev's removal, some of the legends which had been assiduously promoted by the mass media during the long years of Stalin's rule resurfaced in the minds of many Soviet citizens. Roy Medvedev recalls an occasion in the 1960s when he was sitting in the largest reading-room of the Lenin Library in Moscow and applause suddenly broke out behind him. He turned round to see Voroshilov coming down the steps. Of the thousand or so readers in the hall, a mere half dozen remained in their seats, while the others gave Voroshilov a resounding standing ovation. Their memory of the "court paintings" which portrayed him in heroic pose alongside Stalin on the Kremlin wall eclipsed their limited and fading knowledge of his part in the destruction of the leading cadres of the Red Army.

It was in the Lenin Library in the late 1960s that I, in turn, often saw another of Stalin's men, Vyacheslav Molotov. Molotov has long

time been an honorary member of the Academy of Sciences, and though that title was removed from him under Khrushchev, he retained the privilege of working in the reading-room reserved for Soviet Academicians, professors, doctors of science and foreign scholars. There were no omissions, but he was treated with enormous respect by the library staff. When he left reading-room number one to pass through the more populated catalogue section of the library he was greeted with stares in which awe and curiosity were intermixed. His manner did not exactly encourage autograph-hunters and I never saw anyone attempt to engage him in conversation. With his pince-nez, self-possession and gentlemanly bearing, he looked for all the world like a distinguished elderly professor, a product not so much of the Soviet period as of the pre-revolutionary bourgeois intelligentsia. In respect of his origins at least, the eye did not deceive, but he had more blood than ink on his hands.

An active and important Bolshevik in the revolutions of 1917, Molotov (whose original name was Skryabin) was, after Lenin's death, to become Stalin's closest ally—though that did not stop Stalin from imprisoning Molotov's Jewish wife, Polina Zhemchuzhina, in 1948 during the campaign against "rootless cosmopolitans". When his wife's case was discussed in the Politburo, Molotov abstained from the otherwise unanimous vote in favour of her arrest. On many other occasions, he was a more active participant in persecution. He was a zealous leader of the campaign against "saboteurs" and "spies" inside the party in 1937 and there were times, Medvedev notes, when "instead of recommending a prison sentence Molotov would write alongside the names the ominous initials VMN (the initials of *vysshaya mera nakazaniya*, or 'highest form of punishment'), which in those days meant instant death by shooting".

When Molotov was consulting books in the Lenin Library during the earlier part of his long, enforced retirement, it was rumoured that he was working on his memoirs. Medvedev confirms that Molotov completed at least that part of his memoirs dealing with his life up until 1917, for he offered them to the Soviet writer, Boris Polevoy, for publication in the journal he was editing. Polevoy, after consulting higher authority, turned them down and suggested that he deposit them instead in the Institute of Marxism-Leninism.

Molotov was too orthodox a Stalinist to follow Khrushchev's example and have his memoirs published abroad; Whether, however, he accepted Polevoy's advice is not known. If he has held on to his manuscripts, they are likely, in any event, to end up in an archive of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism to which access will be highly restricted. No sooner had Anastas Mikoyan died on October 21, 1978, than, Medvedev tells us, "officials of the Marxism-Leninism Institute presented themselves at his apartment with a special warrant; after looking over his archives, they took everything away. A specialist from the MVD was brought in to open the safe in his study, and all its contents were also removed. Even his closest relations were not told what his papers contained."

Fragments of Mikoyan's memoirs of his early years did in fact appear in official Soviet publications during the 1960s and 70s, but an apparently more substantial work called "Years, Events, Meetings" which was scheduled for publication in 1978 did not see the light of day. Mikoyan spent a longer time in the leadership than any of his colleagues, working with every Soviet leader from Lenin to Brezhnev. Though this can be seen as opportunism so finely honed as to become an art form there is more to be credited to Mikoyan's account than his virtuoso (and morally dubious) talent as a survivor. As Medvedev puts it:

Mikoyan's political longevity was not solely due to good luck or cunning, to his flexibility or his capacity to give way to force or make compromises; to his phenomenal diplomatic talents. It was, rather, the consequence of his exceptional efficiency. Even Stalin knew the value of that; for after all many a revolution had occurred because of poor supplies.

Mikoyan had far from clean hands during the Great Purge of 1936-38, but even under Stalin he attempted at times to exercise a moderating influence, as on the occasion when he was the



Collectivist contortions: a 1936 photograph by Alexandr Rodchenko reproduced from Grigory Shudakov's *Pioneers of Soviet Photography* (256pp. Thames and Hudson. £20. 0 50034095 0). Sport as a mass activity was an idea that Rodchenko pursued in a number of studies made during the 1930s.

only member of the Politburo to argue during a meeting in 1943 against the deportation of all Chechen and Ingush nationals from the Northern Caucasus. While agreeing in principle (and even then, perhaps, from tactical necessity) that the Chechens and Ingush deserved to be deported, he voiced concern that the deportations would damage the reputation of the Soviet Union abroad. During the Khrushchev years, he was on the more "liberal" wing of the party leadership and an opponent of most of the other Stalin men who figure in Medvedev's book. In international relations of the Khrushchev era—including the Cuban Missile Crisis—his diplomatic skills were devoted to the cause of easing international tension through conciliation and compromise.

Georgiy Malenkov, who acquired an instant reputation for relative liberalism in the West in the immediate post-Stalin years not only by devoting more attention to consumer goods but also by the simple device of smiling (which made a change after the stony-faced Stalin era), is not judged so lightly, or exonerated so easily for all that had gone before, by Medvedev. Malenkov's intimacy with Beria and Yezhov is recalled, together with the fact that he was often present during the interrogation and torture of prisoners. He is summed up by Medvedev as "a man who was precisely fitted for his time, an era that sought out and promoted people like him... a squalid, evil man who has lived a squalid, evil, unworthy life". In retirement he has become a keen photographer and spends much of his leisure-time photographing nature.

His former colleague, Lazar Kaganovich, has taken up the more squalid pastime of dominoes which, apparently, he plays with the same ruthless determination to win which marked his entire political career. According to Medvedev, he is the acknowledged domino champion among the old men of the Frunze Embankment district of Moscow. His greatest grievance is that he has not been given back the party membership which he lost for playing a leading part in the 1957 "anti-party group" attempt to oust Khrushchev. That and the fact that nowadays very few people recognize him. Medvedev recounts Kaganovich's indignation when a young woman doctor addressed him as "Citizen Kaganovich". "Not Kaganovich—Kaganovich", he told her sharply, adding: "There was a time when my name was well known throughout the whole of the Soviet Union."

Indeed it was A. Bolshevik since 1911, Kaganovich was for years Stalin's leading trouble-shooter—and in the most literal sense. While he was often able to mobilize forces for production by a mixture of energy, drive and ruthlessness when others had failed, he was one of the most voracious purgers in the Stalin leadership, responsible for countless imprisonments and deaths by shooting. It is not surprising that he was a particularly stubborn opponent of Khrushchev's bold intention to expose at least a significant part of Stalin's crimes to the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party.

The only person, apart from Mikoyan, among Medvedev's six subjects to be on Khrushchev's side during the "anti-party group" crisis was Mikhail Suslov. And Suslov, though an influential figure also in Stalin's time, was alone of the six, even more important throughout the entire post-Stalin era until his death in January 1980. A more complex personality than some of the others and a highly skilled practitioner of bureaucratic politics, he is acknowledged by Medvedev to have been modest in his life-style and polite in personal relationships (including those with subordinates). At the same time he was such a cautious and conservative Communist that his alliance with Khrushchev (whose temperament and political style could scarcely have been further removed from Suslov's) was at best less than wholehearted and destined to end in Suslov's organizing Khrushchev's removal from the Soviet leadership in October 1964. Suslov's reputation as a major Marxist-Leninist theoretician is, Medvedev notes, more than a little exaggerated; what Suslov did know was the importance of control over ideology as one of the instruments of power within the Soviet system. Thus, he was a chief ideologist with a major interest in preventing fresh thought.

Some of Medvedev's judgments may be questioned. It is, for example, not entirely correct to say that the signs of progress in the social sciences in the 1960s "were totally extinguished in the 1970s". The intellectual life of the Soviet Union in the 1970s displayed many contradictory tendencies, and there were some areas of the social sciences where innovative writing continued to be published, as well as others where previous initiatives were stifled. There is also the occasional factual slip. Dmitry Polyansky (whose initials are wrongly given as A. S. in both the text and index) was never Chairman of the Council of Ministers of the USSR, nor for that matter was Anastas Mikoyan who is twice, wrongly, described as "head of government". The last office he held was that of Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet which meant that he was formal head of state, not head of government, a description which should be reserved for the office of Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

Roy Medvedev has, however, done a good job in bringing to life men who had a heavy responsibility for putting an end to the lives of thousands of their fellow-citizens, including many of their comrades in the Soviet Communist Party. Though Suslov emerges with less discredit than Malenkov, Kaganovich, Voroshilov and Molotov, only Mikoyan appears to stake a claim to be remembered—albeit as the more daring Khrushchev—as a Stalinist with a human face.

*Understanding Soviet Politics through Literature* (207pp. Allen and Unwin: £15. paperback £6.95. 0 04 320155 5) has recently been published. It contains extracts from recent Soviet literature, both official and unofficial, presented and edited by Martin Crouch and Robert Porter, on such themes as "Ideology and the Russian Tradition" and "Stalin and the Stalinist Legacy".

# Dealing with the pope

## Derek Beales

MATTHIAS BUSCHKÜHL  
*Great Britain and the Holy See 1746-1870*  
260pp. Dublin: Irish Academic Press. £17.50.  
0 7165 0290 9  
IGNAZ VON DÖLLINGER  
*Briefwechsel 1820-1890*. Band 4, Briefwechsel mit Lady Blennerhassett 1865-1886  
Edited by Victor Conzemius  
752pp. Munich: Beck. DM88.  
3 406 10346 4

Though fear of popery still embitters the life of Ulster, it now seldom ruffles mainland Britain. But in the period covered by Matthias Buschkühl in *Great Britain and the Holy See 1746-1870*, British anti-papalism rarely slumbered. Reformation statutes made it dangerous for British princes and ministers to correspond with the pope and his officials. Roman Catholics were debarred from office in the United Kingdom until 1829, when their "emancipation" was accompanied by the disfranchisement of most Irish Catholics, to safeguard the Protestant ascendancy. The re-establishment in 1850 of a regular Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales caused a political storm and led to a realignment of parties at Westminster. While the majority of Irishmen were becoming ever more embattled Catholics, most Englishmen, Welshmen and Scotsmen enthusiastically welcomed the dismemberment of the papal state between 1859 and 1870, and greeted the Syllabus of Errors of 1864 and the proclamation of Papal Infallibility in 1870 with a mixture of amazement, horror and derision.

But British governments could not avoid dealing with the pope, both because they had Catholic subjects and because he was a temporal sovereign. During the French wars and immediately afterwards, official relations were friendly, since both parties were dedicated allies against the Revolution. George III offered aid and asylum to the pope, insisted on recognizing his representative and paid a pension to Cardinal York, the last of the royal Stuarts. George IV had to be restrained from continuing cordialities. But both monarchs intransigently opposed Catholic emancipation. By the time this concession was made, the ultramontane reaction within the Church, the problems of British rule in Ireland and the militancy of British Protestantism had combined to ensure that relations between the two states would remain embarrassed and suspicious. The participating diplomats had to lie

for their countries on an unusually comprehensive scale: they had to pretend they were not negotiating at all.

In preparing this short book Buschkühl has read widely in published and unpublished sources. What he has discovered is sometimes novel and striking, for example on the mission of Cardinal Erskine to London between 1793 and 1801 and on the role of Hanover in Anglo-papal relations. An appendix of documents contains further material of interest. The English reader will be especially grateful to be directed to a range of literature in German which is scarcely known in Britain.

The book, then, is useful. But unfortunately it is very far from reliable. The author has a large number of axes to grind, and a breathtaking way with evidence. He tells us, for example:

The whig concept of history derived its foundation from Magna Carta: English history was seen as a glorious movement towards freedom despite the fact that the act of settlement (14 Ch. II, c. 12) introduced villeinage, and that living conditions for the common people of France under Louis XIV and XV were indisputably better than those in England.

His view of the Irish famine would satisfy the most unreconstructed Republican, and he is confident that "the living conditions of the lower classes in the papal states at the time were considerably better than those of the lower classes in Ireland and even in London". He is prodigal with footnotes, but he cites in support of these surprising claims only a passage from E. J. Hobsbawm that does not bear them out, and several from the works of Ludwig Borinski, a writer on English literature to whom the book is dedicated.

Buschkühl appears to have learned from Borinski that English novels provide the securest evidence for historians of England. Many pages of this book depend on an interpretation of Disraeli's *Lothair* (1870), in which the Conservative leader "was able to describe and articulate certain contemporary episodes which normal political writing prevented him from doing". Buschkühl uses the novel not only to reveal the mainstays of Conservative policy towards the papacy in the 1860s, but also to authenticate retrospectively a view of Lord John Russell's attitude to the appointment of Cullen as archbishop in 1849, and to establish the meaning of the decree of Infallibility itself—prophetically, since its text was agreed some months after the novel was published.

We are told that "the whigs led by Clarendon", though they were distressingly anti-papal in principle, considered it was

in their interest not merely to have infallibility dogmatised but to have it dogmatised in the extreme form as advocated by Manning and Ward, who even regarded papal pronouncements on political issues as infallible. This would have meant that papal pronouncements on Ireland were infallible. In order to hurl the catholic church into the right frame of mind, the pope, the catholic church and the catholic Irish were all curiously presented in a positive light in English literature and the press.

Evidence for this cunning literary conspiracy comes from *Lothair* and from Borinski on *Phineas Finn*. In fact, Clarendon and other ministers thought there was no point in working against infallibility because it was certain to be accepted, and in any case would have the beneficial effect of weakening the pope's authority in practice. The very idea that infallibility might assist the British in Ireland amused Odo Russell, and Buschkühl's proposal to remove an exclamation mark from the crucial letter as published in Noel Blakiston's *The Roman Question* does not affect the issue.

After this, it need cause E. E. Y. Hales little pain that Buschkühl considers Hitchman's "by far the best biography of Pius IX in English"—the book, published in the year of the pope's death, amounts to no more than an extended obituary notice. "Official Tory historiography" will survive the imputation that it has suppressed the facts of Disraeli's deathbed conversion to Roman Catholicism, as revealed in *John O'London's Weekly* for November 25, 1922.

In this cacophony of axe-grinding, one of the more strident themes is hostility and contempt for the Liberal Catholics who fought Infallibility, especially Acton and Ignaz von Döllinger. The former has shocked Buschkühl by his ferocious anti-papalism: "I pray to God", Acton declared in 1867, "that I may live to see the whole of this fabric destroyed and the Tiber flow with the blood of the massacred Priests." Döllinger is blamed for "historicism", "unrestrained passion", out-of-date history and "English orientation". "He was therefore, for example, opposed to O'Connell's repent movement." These charges can be weighed in reading Volume Four of Victor Conzemius's magisterial edition of Döllinger's correspondence, *Briefwechsel mit Lady Blennerhassett 1865-1886*. After a regrettable hiatus which was no fault of the editor's, it is good to see the series resumed.

Döllinger's correspondent in this volume is Charlotte von Leyden, after 1870 Lady Blennerhassett. She called herself a bluestocking. Her skills were in discussion and analysis, not painting and music. She tried to

do a deal with her first suitor: if he would let her write books, she would allow him eight cigars a day. She got to know Döllinger because he was intrigued to see a woman's name on book orders in the Bavarian state library. Their correspondence was most intense between 1865 and 1870 inclusive, less regular in the 1870s and fitful thereafter. Most of it is in German, some in French and English. It shows Döllinger at his most human, charming and considerate. She, forty-four years his junior, writes with freedom, discussing almost on a basis of equality the questions and personalities of the day, especially his ideas and tactics as an opponent of Infallibility. The letters, together with her diary of 1870-71 published as an appendix to this volume, constitute an important source for the views and activities of the Liberal Catholics before, during and immediately after the Vatican Council of 1870.

Her husband, Sir Rowland, was an Irish landlord educated on the Continent, a pupil of Döllinger. In the late 1860s he financed the Liberal Catholic *Chronicle*, and he sat in the House of Commons as a moderate Liberal from 1865 to 1885. She was not much in London; only a handful of these letters were written from Britain. But his and her circle had some importance in late Victorian history. We learn from this correspondence a good deal about Acton and something about Gladstone. Sir Rowland became disillusioned with the Liberal leader's Irish policies in the 1880s. So did Döllinger, who bears out Buschkühl's opinion of his coolness towards Irish aspirations.

If Gladstone... intends to stay in office until Irish affairs are arranged and a lasting pacification is achieved, then I fear he will die a minister. American Fenianism scoffs at all English efforts at reconciliation. . . . The saddest thing is . . . the moral condition of the Irish clergy.

Lady Blennerhassett was to contribute to Acton's *Cambridge Modern History*, and her daughter carried her Catholic cosmopolitanism to Australia and New Zealand as a governor-general's lady.

Acton and Döllinger hoped to defeat Infallibility by superior scholarship. They failed in 1870, but the TLS reviewer of Volume Two of Conzemius's edition of Döllinger's *Briefwechsel* (December 22, 1966) thought they had succeeded posthumously, citing the Second Vatican Council. Buschkühl's intolerant book is one piece of evidence that this judgment was too optimistic. But whatever may have been the case in 1870, in the comparison between these two books the scholarly advantage lies overwhelmingly with the Liberals.

# French History Studies



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# Everyday occurrences

Tony Parker

ANGUS CALDER and DOROTHY SHERIDAN  
(Editors)  
*Speak for Yourself: A Mass-Observation  
Anthology, 1937-49*  
250pp. Cape. £12.50.  
01224 01028

The Mass-Observation Archive is preserved at the University of Sussex and from it the curators, Dorothy Sheridan, and Angus Calder have now produced this first anthology, taken from the period 1937-49.

Mass-Observation began as a result of a fortuitous meeting between Charles Madge, who was trying to find out what ordinary British people really thought and felt about Edward VIII's abdication (as opposed to what newspapers almost universally reported as an antagonistic reaction to the King), and Tom Harrison, who at the same time was starting to carry out what he called "anthropological field-work", studying everyday life in Bolton. Their ideas about new ways of gathering material - and more importantly of its potential richness, variety and value - coincided. They joined forces and enlisted volunteers to help them in Bolton and Blackheath, asking them either to observe and complete regular reports on the minutiae of the lives of people around them, or to keep detailed personal diaries about themselves and in due course allow the confidences they revealed to be published anonymously.

"British Legion competitions", "Commemorative magazines", "Dreams", "Little-woods", "Public politeness", "World organization" - are a few of the subject-headings under which the archive material is now classified. But these topics are mundane in comparison with some originally suggested as worthy of careful study and close attention: "Behaviour of people at war memorials", "Shouts and gestures of motorists", "Beards, armpits and



"1949 Blackpool, the holiday centre for the north of England" by Felix 11. Man, from *Man with Camera: Photographs from Seven Decades* (Secker and Warburg, £17.50, paperback, £9.95, 0-436 27170 2).

eyebrows", "Female taboos about eating" and "The private lives of midwives".

The diarists contributed self-focused pieces which are vivid and moving in their unselfconscious ordinariness. The two quoted in the book are accounts of one randomly selected day, September 12, 1937. One is by a housewife in Kent, married to a farm labourer, the other by a young man in Cheshire concerned with his evening's amorous progress; both have a dreamlike reality that even the best fiction rarely achieves. There are also precise accounts of such things as the making of Blackpool rock, and a list of all the songs sung at a party in Lambeth.

Most entertaining of all are selections from the fieldwork reports of Observers. They took themselves and their voluntary labours completely seriously, frequently working in pairs so that one could watch and commentate while the other scrawled notes which were written up later. When the behaviour of courting couples on Blackpool sands at night was the subject, a degree of voyeurism could easily be suggested, but the reports are so diligently and artlessly written that they are not offensive:

Subject: sample of couples 11.30 to midnight. Sitting down and embracing 120; standing up embracing 42; lying on sand embracing 46; sitting kissing 25; necking in cars 9; standing kissing 3; girl sitting on man's knee 7.

Kisses were timed in duration to the nearest second, and the changing positions of both right and left hands were carefully noted. There was even the scientifically precise footnote, "It will be noticed that the above list has no category of 'Copulating'. There is a simple reason for this: none of the couples were copulating."

An observation of a man undressing and

getting into bed, timed as having taken eight minutes forty seconds to complete, reads like a stage direction by Samuel Beckett. Another fascinating section records the spontaneous verbal reactions of a wide cross-section of the civilian population to their mental and physical suffering in air raids. It was patient, resigned and enduring, with little bravado or jingoism, and with tart comments about "the somewhat nauseating complacency of the BBC". A twenty-year-old middle class woman "slept in the basement with her cat Tibbes" for a while, but then moved into a public shelter at nights in order to be able to collect and record more varied material. In later years Tom Harrison pointed out that Mass-Observation Observers never signed the Official Secrets Act, and that there are no other contemporary accounts of the Blitz as candid as those they compiled and which are now in the Archive.

A list of the treasures here presented could continue almost indefinitely. This is a wonderful book, and it is much to be hoped that it is only the first of several further selections.

## The masculine style

David Craig

KEN WORPOLE  
*Dockers and Detectives*  
125pp. Verso/NLB. £14 (paperback, £3.95).  
086091 0792

Ken Worpole has written a useful book which could have been very valuable. What he has done is to inform us about an area which counts for little in the nation's cultural debates: the literary habits - reading and writing - of the non-middle-class majority. What he could have done is make an unanswerable case, by well-directed literary criticism and better-chosen quotation, that the writers disregarded by the middle-class culture are excellent enough to demand reading and reprinting.

Mr Worpole is concerned not with the actual best seller or with books that are manufactured for mass sales but with the books that have meant most to workers engaged in a conscious process of understanding their world and telling their stories in the face of snobbish disregard, the discomfiture of their own communities, and other deterrents that beset honest witnesses not situated inside some comfortably established trend or fashion.

*Dockers and Detectives* consists of four separate essays which converge on that theme. The first shows that between the wars it was American, not English, writers who were felt by working-class readers in this country to be dealing most relevantly with their world of tough work in corrupt cities, and that inside this American tradition a commercial writer, Dashiell Hammett, was a more fruitful influence than more highbrow writers. The second discusses the literature of the Second World War, insists that documentary should be brought into our concept of literature and notes that the experiences of the non-commissioned mass of fighting men are greatly under-represented in what has been published. The third deals in detail with Liverpool writers (James Hanley, George Garrett, Jim Phelan) who belonged to the sea-going subculture. They tended to write in an intense expressionist style which stressed the thrashing, choking and foundering of lives caught in the brutal struggle to make a living on Merseyside between the wars. The fourth essay describes the dense literary culture of the Jewish East End of London in the earlier decades of this century and traces common factors among the many novelists and autobiographers (eg. Simon Blumenfeld, Willy Goldman) who grew from it before the dispersal into the slaver and less sustainable milieu of Soho and Fitzrovia in the 1940s and 50s.

Each of these chapters would have benefited from more considered literary criticism. The Jewish chapter is nearly a list, and one that has room for only a brief mention of Arnold Wesker. The author of a stage play (*Chicken Soup with Barley*) about a Jewish socialist family, a novelist (*People*) about an old woman who cannot live outside the community of her

Brick Lane area even when most of her family have moved out, and another play (*The Old Ones*) about the morale of a Jewish radical family who have nearly left the old ways behind, is surely entitled to more than one paragraph of summary.

Most of the Jewish novels mentioned are merely summarized; their intrinsic qualities are barely gone into and quotation is used mainly to confirm historical points about the writers' reading habits. The chapter on the Liverpool writers assumes a direct match between the fiction and the social reality: "Such a novel could have been written only by a person who knew life on board ship in all its squalid tyranny and oppressiveness". But it seems to me from Worpole's account of James Hanley's novels *Drift* and *Boy* that their violent stress on homosexual rape and other sexual torments is no more to be read literally than are Gorky's novels about small-town life on the Volga in the 1880s. Expressionism is not naturalism; its lurid nightmares are as likely to represent a displacement of trauma from one part of experience to a quite different one as they are to provide direct evidence of what has really happened.

Worpole's critical method rests too much on paraphrase to cope with issues of that kind. A sustained case of this occurs in the first chapter, "The American Connection: The Masculine Style in Popular Fiction". This title hints at a key issue: the degree to which the invigorating stress on outward actions clearly observed, in writers of the Hemingway school, was achieved at the expense of inwardness - psychological subtlety and the more tender emotions. Worpole is so concerned to argue for the validity of "the masculine style", especially its power of presenting "the jungle of the cities" in a way that worker-readers relished and the upper-middle-class novels failed to offer, that he can only nod in the direction of questions about the limitations of the tough-guy types of writing, in particular what it says about the character-structure which has entrenched itself in us (especially in working-class psychology?) when we are so addicted to novels about whose typical hero Raymond Chandler himself observed that "the really good detective never gets married".

One of the finest living novelists, David Storey, has again and again exploited the intensely complex layers of experience where the more masculine and the more feminine parts of our natures interact. At times, as in *Radcliffe* and *Passmore*, he has seen this as a polarity between working class and middle class. He has been able to do so from his own life as a miner's son whose father could never reconcile himself to the fact that, for his son, an artist's work could be the hours spent contemplating and drawing a naked woman or a rose. If Worpole is to go further into the matters he has raised, he would have to analyse good novels for that level of complexity, and such novels might well include the work he has touched on by James Hanley, Alexander Baron and James Gribble.

## Day-trips to Cythera

Anita Brookner

DONALD POSNER  
*Antoine Watteau*  
288pp, with 64 colour and 250 black-and-white illustrations. Weidenfeld and Nicolson. £30.  
0297 783246

The tercentenary of Watteau's birth falls in 1984 and thus he, in his turn, comes up for reconsideration. Like Raphael, he too was garlanded with praise, both during his lifetime and immediately after his early death, but in Watteau's case the praise is of a slightly more interesting nature. Nobody, even among his closest friends, thought of him as a gentleman, a polymath, a courtier, or a man of divine grace and accomplishment: on the contrary, those who knew him went out of their way to underline the prickliness, the awkwardness of his character and behaviour. He is described as caustic, melancholy, withdrawn, bad-tempered, sardonic, unpredictable, impatient, cold misanthropic and "always discontented with himself and with others". Of no fixed abode, he preferred to lodge with friends and he free to decamp at will, and he was by turns timid ("un peu burger") and solipsistic. As it is his closest friends who describe him in this manner it is not too difficult to imagine that those who knew him rather less intimately found him even more tricky to deal with. Yet, in spite of these dire dispositions, it is also true to say that no one had a bad word to say about him - proof, if any were needed, that his unique qualities were never in any doubt.

An engraving by Boucher after a lost self-portrait shows a thin man with a drawn face and dishevelled clothes; his appearance gives credibility to both his wasting illness and the reputed dirtiness of his working methods. This unassimilable character excited a fascinating interest among the well-intentioned and the well-to-do: far from being the *poète maudit* he was later to become in the eyes of the Romantics, he did not starve in garrets or languish for want of commissions, nor did he die in poverty. By the same token, ie, because he was not a Romantic, he left no personal opinions or statements, no expressions of indebtedness to patrons or painters, no records of work undertaken or accomplished, and, most crucial of all, no explanation of his paintings. Hence the historiography of Watteau is largely built around the fantasies and anxieties that his commentators have wished upon him, for the sparse biographical details, established by his friends shortly after his death, have never been amplified, and it seems unlikely now that they ever will be. Donald Posner's book, therefore, is a readable restatement of all that is already known, an anniversary volume that reveals but does not resolve the puzzles - they do not qualify as problems - with which commentators have had to grapple ever since the paradoxical nature of Watteau and his art first became apparent.

The first paradox is a historical accident. The titles by which Watteau's paintings are now known are not his own. They were supplied by his friend, Jean de Jullienne, when he had Watteau's entire work engraved after the painter's death from consumption in 1721. This act of piety, commingling with Jullienne's own more sanguine temperament, produced titles which convey an air of lightness, flirtation, desire and pleasure; they are gallant and romantic and in themselves peculiarly charming. Who would not be drawn to a picture entitled "Les Charmes de la Vie" or "Les Plaisirs du Bal" or "Les Fêtes Vénitienes" or, supremely, "L'Amour paisible"? These titles have served to obliterate Watteau's intentions and may not accurately transcribe the gravity of what the Goncourt's intuitively perceived as *La Philosophie de Watteau* in their magnificent essay of 1856. Yet the Goncourt's title is already of a different order of magnitude from Jullienne's titles, and is today considered excessive. And when we consider the title of the Wallace Collection's "Voulez-vous triompher des belles?" (which, in Professor Posner's hard-nosed translation, becomes "Do you want to succeed with women?") it is clearly inappropriate to speak of the philosophy of Watteau; Nor is he producing a manual of seduction or a compendium on the stages of love - but that is another far more popular, paradox.

It is the very absence of Watteau in his work which in some way only serves to underline his

aloofness and thus, in another sense, his supreme presence, that constitutes the ultimate paradox: we lack a proper knowledge of his intentions, although we are, and are allowed to be, extremely familiar with what has also, and more recently, been described as his "world". That this "world" was a construct, arrived at by fairly logical stages, can be and has been established. From a life determined almost entirely by contingencies, Watteau was able to fashion a style and a set of subjects that possess a curious self-absorption, as if they had no connection with the real preoccupations of ordinary people, no terms of reference beyond themselves. The evolution of Watteau's closed system may be seen either as the desperate act of a social isolate or as the confident pragmatism of a born observer; there is no way of arriving at Watteau's actual reasons for doing what he did. Equally, there is no way of discovering why this son of a Flemish roof-tiler should become all the rage in Paris, although there is evidence to suppose that he originally envisaged his career as a journeyman and did in fact earn his living as one for some years after his arrival there in 1702. When, at the end of his life, already desperately ill, he undertook the great "Enseigne de Gersaint" and painted this most magnificent of shop signs in a reputed eight days, it may have been his expressed wish to return to those apprentice years, and to exercise his first trade once more, with all the panache of the accomplished and renowned artist he had become.

It is not known how or where he met his first master, the insouciant and eccentric Claude Gillot, or his second, Claude Audran, who practised his trade as an ornamentalist in many of the royal apartments. It is known that from those two highly individual masters Watteau absorbed a familiarity with the characters of the *commedia dell'arte*, which appears to have been the ruling passion of the stage-struck Gillot, and an ability to manipulate small figures in decorative settings, which was the stock-in-trade of the ornamentalist in general, and of Claude Audran in particular. Of the two masters, Audran was the more important; without the example of his brilliant cursive style of draughtsmanship, largely in red chalk, before him, Watteau might not have been able to cut so many corners and dump overboard the entire academic tradition of *ronde-bosse* drawing. In addition to this, Audran was curator of the Luxembourg Place which housed Rubens's great cycle of pictures painted for Marie de Médicis between 1621 and 1625. These works were, perhaps, the weightiest single factor in Watteau's development because through them he renewed contact with his Flemish origins and became acquainted with the glamour of one of the most worldly painters in the history of European art.

Watteau's originality, from the very first, was perceived by his contemporaries as being exceedingly modern: he was the antithesis of the heavily-plotted, Italianate, text-ridden style of the French Academy, so recently dominated by Charles Le Brun, with his manual of expressions that would enable both painter and spectator to arrive at an instant understanding of passion, grief, anger, fear, desire, magnanimity, despair, or any combination of two or more of these conditions. Whether Watteau held Le Brun's method in contempt, or whether he simply ignored it, is not known; his mysterious arrival at the Academy was apparently preceded by a reputation spread by word of mouth, and he seems to have drifted away again fairly soon afterwards. He applied for the Rome Prize in 1709, failed to secure it and, again mysteriously, was allowed to choose his own subject when submitting his *moreau de réception*. But he seems to have forgotten about it for five years. Finally, after four reminders from the Academy secretary, he submitted, in 1717, the Louvre version of "L'Embarquement pour Cythère".

It may be thought that with these dispositions towards modernism learnt from his masters - the theatrical subject-matter, the ability to manipulate figures in a decorative setting, the Rubensian gloss, the cursive draughtsmanship - Watteau would have evolved a style sufficiently original to impress his contemporaries. But his contemporaries were men of wit and learning, and they found it easy to perceive the deeper originality of Watteau behind the immediate originality of his style. It lay to his single-handed breaking of the

Cartesian code of cause and effect that had ordained the appearance and the understanding of painting in France since the hegemony of Poussin. There are effects in Watteau's paintings but there are no apparent causes. There are deletions, elisions, assumptions; there are perceptions of momentary states; there are demonstrations of the indeterminate, the fragmentary and the inconclusive; one feels that, with a smile or a yawn, his characters could pass instantly and for no reason into another phase of self-absorbed inactivity.

The novelty was perceived and admired; the idea of the Arcadian interval may have fitted in with memories of the pastoral ideal of earlier French literature, and thus may have seemed less strange and exotic at the beginning of the eighteenth century than it was to appear to the brothers Goncourt. In some of the most haunting sentences ever written about a painter and his imaginary world, the Goncourts expressed their furious nostalgia for experiences which they knew to be beyond their physical and emotional reach. The phenomenon of the Goncourts and *La Philosophie de Watteau* is that this world almost ceases to be imaginary. For the Goncourts it is as if it *had* existed, at some quite specific point during the *ancien régime*, and that it was only by an accident of timing that they, Edmund and Jules, their sensibilities ideally attuned, had been prevented from joining Harlequin and Columbine practising their *gamme d'amour*, or to have been on that idealized day-trip to the Isle of Cythera from which no one returned without the partner of his or her choice. This regret of the nineteenth century for the eighteenth is so complex and so profound that the whole burden of these feelings of loss and longing has become symptomatically transferred to Watteau and his characters, and has enhanced and bedevilled Watteau scholarship ever since.

The question of what Watteau's characters are "doing", of what they are "feeling", is still active in Posner's text and crystallizes around

the subject of the *fête galante*, the pastoral subject enlivened with "real" people, which Watteau was to treat in varying stages of intimacy or grandiloquence in his best-known works. Posner isolates "La Perspective", in Boston, as a work of pivotal significance in the evolution of this genre, and he is right to do so. The painting shows theatrical figures, wearing stage clothes and occasionally gesturing with stage emphasis, transposed to a natural setting of idyllic beauty, with, in the distance, the portico of a ruined palace or villa, said to resemble the substantial house at Montmorency belonging to the millionaire collector Pierre Crozat. Yet, if lightened of its anthropomorphic and anecdotal significance, a significance which continues to exert its power over commentators, "La Perspective" can be read in another way. The massive trees which engulf the space and the actors, reducing their activities to a vanity of the passing moment, establish a time-scale beyond the one indicated by the ostensible subject, and in so doing remind us of the presence of death. This casual, almost hidden allusion to the permanence of nature and the mutability of mood is what gives Watteau's paintings their truly "philosophical" content: the function assumed by great nature is also carried by the statue of Venus in "L'Embarquement pour Cythère", by the rusticated stone pillars in "Les Charmes de la Vie", by the herm in "Voulez-vous triompher des belles?", and by the picture on the walls of Gersaint's shop. And these works are not miniatures, as, for some reason, they are habitually remembered in the mind's eye, but are, or can be, very large. They are major statements, elements of a humanist mythology exactly in tune with the emerging secularism of the early eighteenth century in its more poetic aspect, and one which was to become trivialised and formalized in later decades by the almost standard meditation on ruins.

This interpretation will explain the fact that most of Watteau's major paintings, and some

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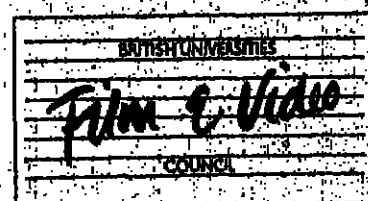
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of his most beautiful minor ones, look as though they were begun and completed as landscapes, the figures added later, sometimes with a dirtier brush loaded with thicker paint and too much oil, and executed with more obvious "effect". It is here that I part company with Posner, who sees the figures as timeless and their moods as constant, as did the Goncourts. Indeed, Watteau's figures seem to enmesh the fascinated speculation of most of his commentators. The most recent and most original, Norman Bryson, sees them as both signifiers and signified, teasing the spectator by their refusal to be explicit, creating "semantic lacunae" by means of which the spectator will be compelled to finish the picture by and for himself, to fill the gaps, complete the meaning. I simply do not believe that any painter, ever, has been or could be content to send a picture out into the world in the hope that it will inspire someone somewhere into guessing his intentions. A painter's intentions are contained, sometimes emblematically, in his paintings. He makes no other statement. If additional explanations of his pictures are needed, then those pictures are, by definition, incomplete.

While avoiding this particular trap, Posner still sees the essence of the mature *fêtes galantes* as "illustrating universal personality types and recurrent moves in the social game of love", rather as if they were mummies by La Rocheoucauld or characters by La Bruyère. It is perhaps time to consider whether Watteau was in fact the astute amateur psychologist he is always held out to be, or whether he was more specifically attached to the outward appearance of things, registering his own perception of that appearance, and formulating that perception in visual terms rather than in concepts which require words, either his own or those of others. It is time, perhaps, to consider whether the element of *staffage* (which in a picture occupies a position midway between articulation and space-filler) is supplied by the landscape or the figures. But as the figures were based on drawings plucked from portfolios and the landscapes were composed in the studio, we shall never know the answer to this question either and must be content to send it to join all the other unanswered questions on the Watteau file.

The Louvre "Embarquement pour Cythère", one of the few pictures painted by Watteau in which landscape and figures are truly seen as one, is also the only fully documented work we have from his hand. We know the date, 1717, and we know the commission: it was to be presented to the Academy as the formal finished work that would demonstrate that the artist was worthy of admission to the Academy's ranks. Accordingly, art historians are able to take a fairly conventional stance towards this picture – to isolate influences, not only that of Rubens, to whom Watteau remained indebted for his physical and facial characteristics, but also those of Castagnola, Jordaeans, Mompier and Savary. Yet over this great picture an identity crisis formerly hovered, and, although resolved by Michael

Levey, it is here resuscitated by Posner, which suggests that the problem was more attractive unsolved than solved. There is an ambiguity about the scene that has always caused people to wonder whether the pilgrimage has taken place, or is about to take place. That the uncertainty hardly matters, given the ripening expressions of anticipation of all the participants, seems in some curious way to have been irrelevant; it was felt that some information was being withheld, and the Comte de Caylus finally brought himself to voice his objection to this when he gave a lecture to the Academy on February 3, 1748, and pronounced, one feels with some exasperation, "ses compositions n'ont aucun objet". This suspicion that the spectator was being trifled with would not doubt have amused Watteau who frequently gave signs of furious boredom and of deepening envy of the less inhibited behaviour of the Italian actors who were by this time his friends. It is possible that the heavy varnish to be removed from this picture it would be seen to be less poignant, less autumnal, more radiant in its acceptance of the promise of happiness, even if that promise is made illusory by the closed eyes of the armless statue of Venus on the right. It is a grave mistake to underestimate the robustness of Watteau, even if that robustness is compromised by his poor health and his apparently puzzling and ill-conditioned nature.

What is truly astonishing is that in the last four years of his short life, when one might have expected the poignancy, wistfulness, allusiveness, etc., to have become more acute, they in fact disappear altogether. In those accelerated years between 1717 and his death in 1721, the rather studied indifference which Watteau has previously exhibited becomes transformed into a riotous appreciation of human oddness. The dispositions of his character finally found an outlet in a subtle form of satire and, having found this outlet, altered and loosened both his style and his approach. The *fête galante* disappears, having served its purpose and outlived its usefulness; the focus is now on real or realistic people in a real or realistic setting. And Watteau's true target is finally revealed to be any form of posturing. Memorable in this context is the small blue-grey picture of "The Actors of the Comédie Française" in the Metropolitan Museum: the hero, loaded with curls and face, balances like an over-fed pigeon on tiny coral-stocked legs. In contrast (and Watteau's pairings are always significant), "The Italian Players" in Washington appear before us breathless and grinning as they take their knock-down and drag-out curtain call. Handling becomes looser, scale increases; the drawings, formerly so tight, angular and scaled down, dissolve into wider gestures and more open contours. Nothing is sacred: the effigy of Louis XIV is unceremoniously packed in straw in a delivery crate by indifferent employees outside Gersaint's impossibly overstocked shop. The age of the Sun King is over and the era of uninhibited debate about to start.

It did not, of course, start for Watteau and it

is unlikely, had he lived, that he would have had anything to say. What he had to say was not to be said in the form of words, programmes, aesthetic innovations, all of which have been posthumously accorded to him. It is possible that he was an instinctive artist who could not explain himself, that his ideas had very little independent existence as such, that his meaning was always latent because he stopped short of explaining it even to himself, let alone to others. It is possible that his was a nature moved entirely by impulses which he could not justify. All his friends note his remarkable inability to stay in one place for any length of time and his tortuous explanations for the various stratagems involved in moving on. Even more puzzling is his decision to spend several winter months in London in 1719–20 – surely an extreme form of evasion for one with bad lungs – when he had plenty of work at home. Nothing is known about this interlude, and this is the most worrying lacuna of all. Fortunately for the memorialist he returned home with sufficient intensity of purpose to paint the "Enseigne de Gersaint", revealing in it both a sense of mockery and a sense of ardour which make us finally feel some pain for these characters at whom, initially, we smile.

Many will prefer to view Watteau as an unreconstructed phenomenon, as the Goncourts wistful tubercular amorist forever disqualified for the game of love, as he himself pretended to be when he portrayed himself as a melancholy bagpipe-player in the beautiful "Fêtes Vén-

tiennes" in Edinburgh. But it is the task of the art historian to dismantle myths, to deal less with taxonomy than with attributions, and always to read the small print. Donald Posner presents the task at its most responsible. Apart from his desire to read messages and signs where none may exist – a temptation which is also part of one's response to this particular artist – he confines his attentions to running the rule over all the known works and laying them out in order. He has little to say about the London visit and refuses to speculate. He repeats Mme Adhemur's intriguing and surely correct theory about the Gilles or Pierrot figure in the Louvre, namely that this stood outside one of the *cafés comiques* opened in Paris by the actor Belloni, when ill-health forced him to retire from the stage. Because of the multitude of questions and the paucity of answers, the early stages of Posner's enquiry are marked by an enthusiasm which perhaps shades off into disappointment at the end. It is to his honour that he is so loyal to his subject. His last words come in the form of a melancholy news bulletin. "Sometime in the spring of 1721, in hope of finding the air better for him, he went to live in the country, Nogent-sur-Marne, about nine kilometres from Paris. The change didn't help and suddenly he wanted to go home to Valenciennes, but it was too late. He was too weak to travel. Death approached and he painted his last work, a 'Crucifixion', now lost, for his friend the parish priest of Nogent. On 18 July 1721 the artist died. He was thirty-seven years old."

## The likeness business

### Malcolm Rogers

J. DOUGLAS STEWART  
Sir Godfrey Kneller and the English Baroque Portrait  
224pp, with four colour and 363 black-and-white illustrations. Oxford: Clarendon Press. £45.  
0 198173563

When the thirty-year-old Godfrey Kneller arrived in England in 1676 he found, as Peter Lely had some thirty years earlier, a society addicted to the perpetuation of its own image through portraiture, and this at the expense of all other genres of painting. The young German was, according to a later report, "a fine & handsome well turned Gentleman that gave a certain grace to all his Actions" and he had the ability to capture a good likeness with dexterity. It is not surprising, therefore, that this former pupil of Bol and Rembrandt, who had travelled in Italy and learnt how to please his patrons, should have risen rapidly to the height of fashion as a portraitist. With the death of Lely in 1680 no serious rival stood between him and complete artistic ascendancy, and "the age of Kneller" inevitably succeeded that of Lely. It lasted until the artist's death in 1723, and so complete was his domination that to all but the specialist his name has obliterated those of his contemporaries. Dahl, Closterman and Richardson all produced work of distinction, but it is Kneller who constitutes the visual index of the late Restoration and early Georgian periods.

Like many successful portraitists, Kneller proved the victim of his success. He was copious and sometimes facile; his productions were eased and multiplied by an efficiently organized studio, to be debased by a multitude of copyists and imitators. As Horace Walpole noted, "where he [Kneller] offered one picture to fame, he sacrificed twenty to lucre". This is a judgment which, though it may be modified, cannot be dismissed. J. Douglas Stewart's long-awaited study goes far to providing a reassessment of Kneller's achievement. This substantial volume is divided into three parts. The first comprises a biography which runs hand in hand with a detailed analysis of Kneller's stylistic development: from his earliest years in Lübeck to his death in London. This is followed by a catalogue of nearly nine hundred of his paintings (not just the portraits), limited to those which are dated or datable and which Professor Stewart has seen personally or which he knows by a good photograph. The third section is a catalogue of the more than one hundred engravings and drawings. There follow appendices covering various biographical sources, a mis-

useful list of records of payment to Kneller and his contemporaries, indices and over three hundred and fifty black and white photographs of his work, more than adequately reproduced by today's low standards. The four colour plates are oddly selected and rather pallid.

The least satisfactory section of the book is the catalogue of paintings, which is in reality little more than an abbreviated check-list, presumably for reasons of economy. This is a pity, for the much fuller catalogue of drawings shows how much of interest Stewart has to tell us about his subject when given a free rein. It is particularly to be regretted in the case of an important patron like the Duke of Marlborough, whose many portraits raise complex problems of dating and relationship. The jejune treatment they receive here does little to unravel the tangle.

The account of Kneller's life and stylistic development is by contrast painstaking, full and meticulously documented; and if Kneller the man does not emerge very strongly it is because the author's "first concern here is with style". The artist's development is carefully charted, through close analysis of individual works, and it is possible both to admire and forgive Stewart's enthusiasm for yet "another exciting half-length". One general stylistic problem to which he does not directly address himself, and one which is raised by his title, is the extent to which Kneller was in an international sense truly a Baroque artist, as opposed to one who merely used Baroque conventions when they suited him. Clearly Kneller's attitude to the Baroque changed as he developed, as a comparison of the group portraits of the 1680s and 90s with the conventional and insipid "The Duke of Chandos and his Family" (1713) makes plain; a comparison with his rival Closterman's "Children of John Taylor" (1696) is even more telling.

To a generation that has judged Kneller by the urbane and well-fed courtiers of the Kit-Club series, many of the paintings illustrated and analysed by Professor Stewart will be surprising. A great full-length like the "1st Duke of Bedford" is imbued with a latent sense of drama, but Kneller's best work is to be found in his male portraits on a smaller canvas, with their extraordinarily direct apprehension of individual psychology. Once seen, it is hard to forget the "Isaac Newton" (1689); a modestly composed half-length in which one of the greatest minds of all time is revealed on the brink of neuroticism; or the "Matthew Prior" (1700), an image of bearing pride: the author of charming verse *he is depicted* using like a poet in his folds of drapery.

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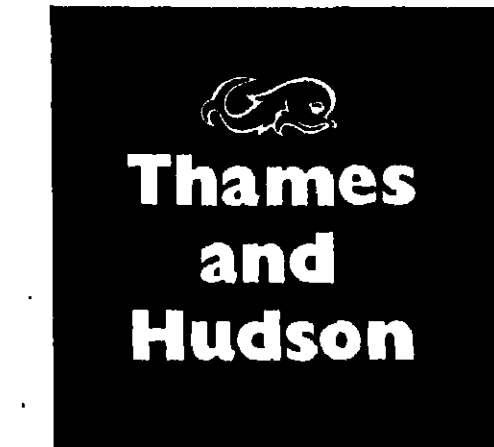
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## Capturing the landscape

Mark Abley

**RON TYLER**  
*Visions of America: Pioneer Artists in a New Land*  
208pp, with 178 illustrations. Thames and Hudson. £18.  
050013187

"All nature here is new to art", wrote Thomas Cole, a Lancastrian who became America's first important painter of landscape. "No Tivolis, Ternis, Mount Blancs, Plinlimmons, hackneyed and worn by the daily perusal of hundreds, but primeval forests, virgin lakes, and waterfalls." In the eastern states, to be sure, the shock of the new soon began to wear off; not long after Cole died in 1848, Niagara would become as familiar a subject as Tivoli or any other European waterfall. Yet the pride in American wilderness grew, mingled with a large dose of fear, and as the frontier moved westward so did a stream of artists in quest of unspoiled glory. *Visions of America* documents their responses to a white civilization in its infancy, a succession of dying Indian cultures, and a continent hardly touched by heavy industry. For better or worse, the lyrical images which the painters produced tended only to accelerate the process of change.

Ron Tyler's choice of pictures is more confident than his text, which begs more questions than it answers. He suggests, for instance, that by 1876 "photographers . . . could produce handsome scenes of town and country that the public immediately accepted as truthful (as indeed they were)". Surely the question of visual truthfulness deserves a less cavalier treatment — as does the relationship between painters' use of colour and photographers' black-and-white in the late nineteenth century. "Their achievements", Tyler believes, "dealt the coup de grâce to landscape and view painting." Cézanne and Pissarro, not to mention Andrew Wyeth, might have thought differently. It

could well be argued that the new technique of photography did not so much destroy landscape painting as encourage its artistic development. *Visions of America* reproduces several pictures which benefited from the influence of photography, notably an energetic wash drawing by William Holmes that may well have been modelled on a photograph by W. J. Jackson. Jackson became such a good friend of the painter Sanford Gifford that the two men made a number of field trips together. And the establishment in 1872 of Yellowstone Park (the first national park in the world) had much to do with the stirring, complementary images brought back from Wyoming by Jackson and another landscape painter, Thomas Moran. Evidently *coups de grâce* are in the eye of the beholder.

In *Visions of America* illustrations are juxtaposed with contemporary descriptions of the United States, many of them written by foreigners; the wonderfully eccentric Prince Maximilian of Wied-Neuwied, who trekked overland to the Rocky Mountains in the early 1830s, is quoted more often than any American. Tyler asserts that "Artists and writers show the same sensitivity, the same quirks of perception, and the same awe and realization that they were experiencing something that few generations could experience". But he claims more than his book provides. Too often the quotations serve as mere captions, explaining the circumstances under which a journey was made or outlining the early history of some illustrated settlement. Vision, in the larger sense of the word, is lacking. Emerson, Thoreau, Melville and Whitman are each quoted but once; Cooper, Hawthorne and John Muir not at all. Although American poetry in the nineteenth century often concerned itself with nature, in this book two poems by William Cullen Bryant must represent the whole tradition.

The concentration on exploration and pioneering means that many of the finest early

American painters are also excluded from Tyler's book. Martin Heade, Thomas Eakins and Winslow Homer are each limited to one picture; J. M. Whistler and J. S. Copley are left out altogether. Against this there are a few minor revelations, such as the evocative water-colours of Richard Kern, reminiscent to my eyes of John Sell Cotman. (There are also the originals, usually by Albert Bierstadt, of a good deal of gaudy department-store art, with a gaudy sun rising or falling beside some embarrassed looking mountains.) If the volume is disappointing, this may be because of Tyler's failure to provide much analysis of the art he presents, or to examine the crucial relationship between images and expectations. As Dennis Reid has observed: "Such artists as Bierstadt and Frederick Edwin Church purveyed a sublime view of nature, displayed for the pleasure and instruction of their patrons. It

was Art for Imperialists, and none the less because it appealed so strongly to a broad public." The visions of the pioneer artists were determined in part by the urban market for their work.

A century later, they seem most interesting at their most ambiguous, as in Thomas Roster's not quite lurid "Opening of the Wilderness". In all probability Rossiter painted this canvas after an "Artists' Excursion" sponsored by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad in 1838. He shows four engines discharging smoke into a fading twilight, below a cloud stained with red. The most prominent forms on the canvas are those of a dead tree and its scanty neighbour, stretching forlornly to the sky. A few stumps lie beside them in shadow. "Opening of the Wilderness" lacks the patriotic grandeur of many landscapes by Cole and Church; but its thoughtfulness stands up well to time.

## Midwestern motherscapes

Hayden Herrera

**WANDA M. CORN**  
*Grant Wood: The Regionalist Vision*  
168pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Yale University Press. £26.50.  
0300031033

Although the couple depicted in Grant Wood's "American Gothic" are almost as familiar as cornflakes, the image is ambiguous. Ever since the painting was first exhibited and won a bronze medal at the Art Institute of Chicago in 1930, it has puzzled spectators: is it a stinging satire of narrow-minded provinciality or an admiring portrait of staunch, God-fearing Midwesterners? Such ambiguities pervade Grant Wood's work — despite its almost obsessive clarity — and give his vision of rural America a peculiar fascination.

Wanda M. Corn's *Grant Wood: The Regionalist Vision* is as lucid as her subject's style. Like the painter, she maintains a nice equilibrium between sympathy and detachment while she traces his artistic development. A course of study at the Minneapolis School of Design and Handicraft was followed by a brief interlude as a rather mediocre Impressionist in Paris; during the Depression years, he donned overalls and painted the fields and folk of Iowa in a diligent, miniaturist manner based on Northern Renaissance painting. Corn's interpretations of Wood's paintings, accompanying each plate, are informative and insightful. Wood's sources, in folk portraiture, art nouveau, nineteenth-century photographs and maps, and his cultural and historical setting, are carefully examined. She points out, for example, Wood's connection with such regionalist writers as Ruth Suckow, Hamlin Garland and Carl Van Vechten, and the effect upon him of the civic pride and "boosterism" that dominated the small city of Cedar Rapids, Iowa during its heyday.

Of the "triumvirate" of regionalist painters — Wood, Thomas Hart Benton and John Steuart Curry — Grant Wood, in Corn's view, was the most complete. He was the only one who lived continuously in the Midwest, and it was he who, in the mid-1930s, exhorted the other two to leave the East and return to the Midwest where they belonged. He carried his regionalist ideal into every aspect of his daily life, even decorating his home with Americana. In his teaching, he insisted that his students paint the world in which they lived and rejoice in the grass-roots culture of their locale; when he established a rural art colony and school in Stone City, Iowa, in 1932, participants lived like pioneers in open wagons which they decorated with folkloric designs.

The most interesting section of the book is the long biographical essay. Wanda Corn suggests that some of the poignancy of Wood's regionalist vision comes from the trauma of his move in 1901, after the death of his father, from the farm near Amesbury, Iowa, where he was born in 1891, to the rapidly growing city of Cedar Rapids. A classic example of modern relocation. The move was not only from the country to the city but from a mainly speaking English, almost entirely German, area to one where English was the dominant language. After the move, the couple depicted in "American Gothic" were not only in the Midwest but in the heart of it.

Americans experienced this same transition in the early twentieth century. In Wood's case, the transition was experienced as an acute sense of loss, and that loss became in part the subject of his art. Unlike Curry or Benton, he did not really paint contemporary life; rather he painted farm life as he imagined it to have been during his childhood and before the appearance of tractors. Wood's farm life with its simple folk wielding pitch forks and guiding horse-drawn ploughs is too idyllic. There is a powerful feeling of denial in his refusal to look at its less sanguine sides. The yards, populated by doll-figures, and the always green, perfectly manicured hills tell us nothing about the farmer's dread of drought, disease or the tax collector; women neither yell at their children, nor get their starched aprons dirty. Like so many artists of the 1930s, Wood gives us the heroic view of the worker — tall, square-jawed, hard-working, clean. During the Depression, when jobs were scarce and prairie farmland was blowing away in the Dust Bowl, the American worker had to be glorified.

It was the fierceness of Grant Wood's need to transform the Midwest into a bright myth, at a time when the world was beset by poverty and then by the threat of war, which gives his paintings their odd visionary intensity. The best of them are not the dour, sardonic portraits of Cedar Rapids citizens, but the farm landscapes of the early 1930s. Stereotypical figures and *Monopoly*-style houses are set in immense, luminous vistas, laid out in tidy compartments with an overall decorative patterning. The coy, knowing character of Wood's style perfectly suits his chaste, childlike vision; yet his landscapes have an appeal that derives not only from a regressive longing for an agrarian past, but perhaps also from their "Freudian" overtones. Wood adored his mother and lived with her for most of his life, marrying a woman older than himself and divorcing her after three miserable years. His father, on the other hand, was a remote authoritarian figure whose approval Wood never felt he had; Wood painted midwestern people as hard and stiff, while he depicted the regional landscape as round and soft, often verging on the erotic. The one, we might say, is masculine, the other feminine. His paintings of people are generally ambivalent in statement, whereas the billowing landscapes are filled with the artist's unquestioning affection. Indeed, there is in this dichotomy an analogy to the very different feeling Wood had for his two parents. It is true, the snug valleys, cotton candy trees and ballooning hills in his paintings have an infantile quality. He allows nature's convolutions a swelling, sithery amplitude, but sensuousness is cut short by finicky perfectionism.

The first five volumes in the Abbeville Modern Masters series, published at £9.95 each and distributed in Britain by Pandemic Ltd, 71 Great Russell Street, London WC1B 3BN, are: *George Segal* by Phyllis Tuchman (128pp, 0 89659 329 0); *Willem de Kooning* by Harry F. Gaugh (136pp, 0 89659 333 9); *Roy Lichtenstein* by Lawrence Alloway (127pp, 0 89659 331 2); *Andy Warhol* by Carter Kasten (128pp, 0 89659 346 X) and *Jackson Pollock* by Elizabeth Frank (128pp, 0 89659 344 3). All are profusely illustrated in colour and black-and-white, and include statements by the artist and art illustrated chronology.

## The Bird Superior

Tim Hilton

**WERNER SPIES**  
*Max Ernst: Loplop: The artist's other self*  
187pp, with 46 colour and 240 black-and-white illustrations. Thames and Hudson. £20.  
0500233713

Max Ernst is at the centre of surrealist art, even though there is an odd modesty in his assertions. He was not the sort of violent intruder into Parisian culture that Dalí was; nor a provincial, like Magritte; and he was not, as was Miró, an artist whose work transcended Surrealism. Ernst had a background in Cologne Dada (and, before that, an association with the cosmopolitan August Macke) that enabled him to join Surrealism in the early 1920s experienced in all kinds of new art, and its politics. Flexibility and a talent for diplomacy were among his credentials. He was a painter, a sculptor, a photomontagist. He was swayed by theory, he wrote theory. He took part in all manner of surrealist group activities, including resignation and excommunication. He contributed to film (he appears in Buñuel's *L'Age d'Or*), wrote in journals, issued pamphlets, organized exhibitions, all as part of that continuous affabulation that was essential to Surrealism — and to which Werner Spies's book pays unwitting tribute.

Spies's examination of Loplop is important because it is the most detailed work on Ernst yet to have appeared, and concentrates on years that were crucial to all Surrealism. He believes that the heart of Ernst's endeavours was in the creation of this partly autobiographical, partly mythological creature, a fantastic birdlike being that was deployed as an alter ego, or to give a commentary on surrealist positions, or to point to those magic places of the unconscious that, Ernst held, should be the subject of modern art. It is useful to have the relevant material assembled, and Spies's text is full of reasonable speculation about the circumstances of Ernst's strange creation. The birdlike figure dates from 1929, but Ernst himself asks us to consider a self-identification with the bird long before that. His autobiographical writings (which exist in a number of forms, confusingly translated and retranslated from *La Révolution Surréaliste*, *Cahiers d'Art*, *This Quarter* and *View*, then augmented and combined with interview) relate the death of "a most affectionate and intelligent pink cockatoo" at the time his father told him of the birth of his sister. "There followed", Ernst explains, speaking of himself in the third person, "a series of mystical crises, fits of hysteria, exaltations and depressions. A dangerous confusion between birds and humans became fixed in his mind and asserted itself in his paintings and drawings."

It is possible to feel impatience with this kind of reminiscence (especially as there is a good deal of it) but Spies is happy to take Ernst on his own terms. Spies points out that Ernst was studying Freud from 1919 onwards, and that he was the first artist to use Freud's writings to build an iconography. He demonstrates that, for example, a drawing done in 1920 consists of those objects to which Freud attributes unconscious-erotic meaning. Yet he does not question the self-dramatization of Ernst's autobiographical protestations, even though he reveals the amount of calculation that led to Loplop's first public appearance. The works in which the bird was first seen were made from collaged elements and seem to be at least partly inspired by Ernst's wish to explore the relatively new technique. In 1930 the Goemans Gallery held an exhibition of collage which included work by both Picasso and Braque, its pioneers, and the dada and surrealist artists who inherited its means. The show was accompanied by Aragon's *La Peinture au Défi*. Spies argues convincingly, that this text spurred Ernst. Six months later he held a one-man show which contained forty-five works. In many of them Loplop presides, evidently a figure of some significance. But it is not clear if the bird really comes from the deep, dark places of the mind, or from the specific circumstances of Parisian exhibitions. When Ernst asserts that "after having composed with method and violence my novel *La Femme 100 Têtes* I am visited almost daily by the Bird

Superior, Loplop — my private phantom", how seriously should we take him?

*La Femme 100 Têtes*, which includes a number of Loplop plates, is a "collage-novel". It was devised by taking nineteenth-century engravings from catalogues, romances and popular science publications. These illustrations were doctored by collaging on to them bizarre and extraneous elements. They were then sent to a printer: his reprinting gave an even tone to the differing original blacks and disguised the joins made by Ernst's scissors and paste. The results were given long titles, were bound up and published as a limited-edition *beau livre*. The question now arises of the relationship of the "novel" to fine art. Spies does not discuss

more complicated feelings of hostility towards fine art than many of his comrades: that is because he had a hankering for it. The invention of Loplop belongs to the crisis of Surrealism because Ernst saw the dead-ends of the anti-art attitude. He was aware that to destroy art is not itself a minor ambition, but is the ambition only of a minor artist. A part of Ernst wanted to be a good artist and a larger part of him wanted to be a famous artist. The Loplop collages that followed *La Femme 100 Têtes* are part of his desire to introduce something new (therefore not destructive) to art, while at the same time avoiding painting — which was not only a bourgeois medium but provided unnervingly difficult competition. There were still difficulties. The first was the example of Picasso and Braque. They had made *papiers collés* of clearly unmatchable beauty and conceptual elaboration. But they had made them from newspaper and scraps of this and that, so they offered the dadaist no opportunity to supersede them in either aesthetic or anti-art terms. There was, however, one way for Ernst to stake out his own ground. It was to be literary, and attract the homage of literary men. Surrealism, the most lettered of all modern movements, was ideal for such purposes. Thus Ernst developed an intricate iconography that has no parallel in other twentieth-century art. But is it not rather like that self-advertisement piled on self-indulgence so characteristic of one type of poet, yet so often imputed to fine artists?

Spies is so versed in Surrealism that he not only has great expertise in its iconography but presents characteristically surrealist arguments, scarcely reportable without parody, for the justification of such subject-matter. For instance: the Loplop collages present an agglomeration of things and curiosities, just as there were once cabinets of curiosities when art was a measure of the world; but that was before the Enlightenment; then reason measured the world; so the Romantics had to invent other worlds and Surrealism is the heir to Romanticism and keeps us busy questioning reason to this day. Spies's blithe dismissals of the rational do not represent his strengths as an art historian. He is at his best when closest to Ernst and his friends. He elucidates the alliances that are depicted in "Au Rendez-vous des Amis"; he recounts his own experiments with Ernst's *fröge* technique, describes Eluard's postcard collection and tells us of the case of the patricide Violette Nozères, whose history explains the "Homage à une enfant nommée Violette" of 1933. He is good with Surrealism's favoured books. He shows the Surrealists' liking for Achim von Arnim's *Isabella von Aegypten* and the "parapsychology, cabalism and physics to which Arnim had been deeply drawn by Johann Wilhelm Ritter"; and although he too easily gives Ernst a "place in the history of ideas" assumed by these men Spies is helpful in showing how his "dictionary of forms" — the hands, plants, lions' heads and forests that accompany the Loplop image — derive from Ernst's eclectic reading.

Whether the Loplop series amounts to an authentic expression is another matter. Spies compares Ernst with two other artists who invented an *alter ego*. Duchamp's *Rose Sélavy* and Picasso's *minotaure* make instructive contrasts. But the mere introduction of Picasso is troubling to the unspoken assumption of this book, which is that Ernst was a great artist. He was not. He dissipated his abilities in strategy. His art hides behind the aura he created about himself. His acuteness to themes that were in the surrealist air, his busy replies to other people's initiatives, his reluctance to commit himself, his reliance on photography, all ensured that he was a reflexive rather than a creative artist. He needed to attach himself to others. Hence the attraction to Freud, and thus to Leonardo. With some bravura, Spies discusses Freud's famous essay "A Childhood Memory of Leonardo da Vinci" and the diagram by Oskar Pfister that accompanied it. This sketch was intended to bring out Leonardo's vulture fantasies, half-hidden in "The Virgin and Child with St Anne". As Spies shows, it lies behind Ernst's picture of the Virgin spanking the Christ Child in front of himself, Breton and Eluard. This is a nice, art-historical discovery, but it is still a discovery about an inadequate painting.

Thomas Eakins

**Lloyd Goodrich**  
*Director Emeritus, Whitney Museum of American Art*

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# The periodicals, 13: *PN Review*

Cairns Craig

MICHAEL SCHMIDT (Editor)  
*PN Review* 36: Some Contemporary Poets of  
 Britain and Ireland  
 64pp. Subscriptions £11.50 pa. from 208-212  
 Corn Exchange Buildings, Manchester M4  
 3BO.  
 015635 508 9

In his editorial for *PN Review* 30 (1982), Michael Schmidt challenged the principles of selection in Blake Morrison and Andrew Motion's *Contemporary British Poetry*. *PN Review* 36 is his answer to Motion and Morrison: modestly entitled "some Contemporary Poets of Britain and Ireland", it sets out to provide a "catholic corrective to those anthologies that insist on the primacy of particular schools and discern new beginnings in the redeployment of old tropes and techniques". The tone is typical of *PN Review*: it mixes a sense of broad-minded openness to poetic excellence with a combative and aggressive sense that the seriousness of poetry is under attack from the relativistic "flippancy before formal and social choices" (*PN Review* 1) encouraged in the undemanding era initiated by the self-indulgent 1960s.

It is this emphatic assertion of the essential "seriousness" of poetry that has given *PN Review* its significance over the past decade. It publishes poetry in a format and in an intellectual context which underline that to the editors poetry is no marginal business – however much of a minority interest – but is engaged at the very core of a society's self-awareness. It has the space to provide regular reports from various European centres; it has the resources to mount major initiatives in recovering neglected writers (like Edgell Rickwood or George Barker); it has the resourcefulness to publish the transcript of a filmed discussion with Simone de Beauvoir or a substantial critical analysis of Peter Weiss's political aesthetic. It

has, in other words, attempted to take poetry out of the backwaters of intellectual life and to find in it again the crucial index of cultural health. In so doing it has often succeeded in broadening the horizons of our view of twentieth-century poetry and in encouraging poets to be ambitious about their concerns.

The anthology, therefore, is important: it is, as it were, a test of the standards by which *PN Review* wishes to be known. If it shares a significant common ground with the Motion and Morrison selection in the work of Peter Scupham, James Fenton, Tony Harrison and Jeffrey Wainwright, it deviates from it in the substantial space it gives to poets like Dick Davis, Robert Wells and Clive Wilmer, who have long been championed by *PN Review* and who are, in the words of Schmidt's introduction to the book version of the *PN* anthology, published by Carcanet (184pp. £9.95, 0 85635 469 4), "resolutely traditional in their approach to the craft of poetry, and yet whose precisions make them in some respects most radical". It is a radicalism of defying the contemporary: such poets are underestimated by critics who have an inflated conception of the importance of their own time and therefore seek the *Zeitgeist* in an insistent and divisive separation of the present from the past. Such a separation represents, to *PN Review*, a fundamental betrayal of the seriousness of poetry.

What emerges from this selection of poems, however, is less the seriousness of works engaged in "the responsibilities to a vital linguistic and formal heritage, to a living language, to a living community" (as it was phrased in *Poetry Nation* 1 in the days when it was a bi-annual anthology), than a common tone of meditative solemnity. Time and again poems open with an observation to be moralized into significance, and the tone of concerned thoughtfulness regularly concludes with an ironic limitation of expectations, as in David Constantine's "Watching for Dolphins":

We had not seen the dolphins  
 But woke, blinking. Eyes cast down

With no admission of disappointment the company  
 Dispersed and prepared to land in the city.

The external world seems to exist in many of these poems as a series of occasions contrived for a reflective consciousness that endlessly rehearses a measured loss and a not-too-dramatic regret: as Derek Mahon puts it in "The Woods": "we travelled on / to doubt and speculation, / our birthright and our proper portion".

Only two of Motion and Morrison's "six poets from the North" find a place here, and if Heaney objected to their inclusion of him in that geo-political category, others might find Schmidt's return "to the New Critical heresy in which I was reared" equally unacceptable in its implication that Britain and Ireland are a single cultural realm.

The neutral environment of "excellence" will be no real defence against such complaints, for the continuity which *PN Review* has asserted is not primarily that of a poetic tradition, even of the poetic tradition stemming from Hardy with which it is often connected. It is with the cultural and social views of the later Eliot that it has most in common: Eliot's monarchism and Anglo-Catholicism are reg-

## FIFTY YEARS ON

The TLS of March 22, 1934, carried a review  
 essay on the centenary of the birth of William  
 Morris by A. C. Brock:

It so happened that Morris found, by way of his taste for the Middle Ages, an easy transition between his completely private poetry and the more public verse which he could produce more or less at will. He never had to undergo the customary torment of the romantic poet who, when his spring of fantasy runs dry – as it almost always does – tries to make it flow again, or at best has to use his intellect rather than his intuition. Even his poem of the Hollow Land shows some signs of the transition, for in an attempt to make it fit the more or less medieval story in which it appears it is thinly disguised as a prayer. In most of his early poems the position is reversed; the poem as a whole is an imitation of a medieval style, but here and there are lines which derive only from his private vein of fantasy. The two elements are by no means so incongruous as it might appear; for as it happens there are a number of ballads and carols in which there are lines of mysterious and meaningless poetry, admirably combining with what is by nature popular verse. Indeed, popular poetry seems to have a natural tendency to slip into something indistinguishable from the eccentricities of private

fantasy. The meaningless phrases which sometimes adorn music-hall ditties may be paralleled by the strange and romantic phrases which often occur in ballads, by such phrases as: "All under the leaves and the leaves of life." In precisely the same manner Morris inserted the images of his own fantasy into his imitations of medieval popular verse. It is significant that he had a great aptitude for refrains, for such cabalistic lines as: "Two red roses across the moon . . ." or: "When the sword went out to sea". The mixture is particularly subtle and successful in the poem "Golden Wings", where the ballad has become pure incantation, or the incantation ballad . . . The early prose romances are even more mysterious than the early poems. They are wandering, improbable, and obscure, and the fantasy which was to be successful when compressed into a few lines of verse became incoherent when expressed at length in prose. But it is easy to understand from them why Morris was drawn towards legends and fairy-stories, to which they have an obvious resemblance. His curious emotions about Iceland illustrate very clearly the relation between his own imagination and these legends. In his journeys to the North he again became free from the sublimary world and returned to the mysterious raptures of his youth.

## AMONG THIS WEEK'S CONTRIBUTORS

G. E. Aylmer is Master of St Peter's College, Oxford.  
 Derek Beales is Professor of Modern History at the University of Cambridge.  
 Mary Kathleen Benet's books include *Writers in Love*, 1977.  
 Philip Brady is Reader in German at Birkbeck College, London.  
 Anita Brookner's *Jacques-Louis David* was published in 1980.  
 Archie Brown is co-editor of *Soviet Policy for the 1980's*, 1982.  
 Terry Coleman's books include *Thanksgiving*, 1982.  
 Jim Crace's collection of stories, *Coulter*, was published last year.  
 Cairns Craig is a lecturer in English Literature at the University of Edinburgh.  
 David Craig is the author of *Extreme Situations*, 1979.  
 Juliet du Boulay is an Honorary Research Fellow in Social Anthropology at the University of Aberdeen.  
 Tim Dooly is Head of the English Department at Whitmore High School, Harrow.  
 Kate Flint is a lecturer in English at the University of Bristol.  
 Lawrence Gowing's books include *Turner: Imagination and Reality*, 1966.  
 John Golding is a tutor in the Painting School of the Royal College of Art.  
 John A. C. Grippin is Professor of Linguistics at Cleveland State University.  
 Christopher Haigh is Tutor in Modern History at Christ Church, Oxford.  
 Robert L. Herbert is Lehman Professor of the History of Art at Yale University.  
 Hayden Herrera's biography of Frida Kahlo was published last year.  
 Tim Hilton is the author of *Picasso*, 1976.  
 Roger Jones is the author, with Nicholas Penny, of *Raphael*, which was published last year.  
 Blake Morrison's monograph on Seamus Heaney was published in 1983.  
 Richard Overy is a lecturer in History at King's College, London.  
 Tony Parker's latest book is *The People of Providence: A housing estate and some of its inhabitants*, 1983.  
 T. J. Reed's *Cocaine* will be published in the Oxford "Past Masters" series this Autumn.  
 Graham Reynolds's catalogue of the later paintings of John Constable will be published later this year.  
 Malcolm Rogers was the organizer of the recent exhibition *William Dobson 1611-46: The Royalists at War* at the National Portrait Gallery.  
 Richard E. Speer's *Don Quixote* was published in 1982.  
 David Summers's *Michelangelo and the Language of Art* was published in 1982.  
 Philip A. M. Taylor is Professor of American History at the University of Hull.  
 David Trotter is a study of twentieth-century American, English and Irish poetry, *The Making of the Reader*, 1983.  
 William Vaughan is a study of the history of the novel, *The English Novel*, 1983.

# Letters

## 'The Sinking of the Belgrano'

Sir, – Your prompt publication (March 9) of Lawrence Freedman's lengthy and thoughtful review of our book, *The Sinking of the Belgrano*, reflects the importance with which that sad event is still regarded in this country. The review gives the impression that Freedman agrees with the decision of Mrs Thatcher's War Cabinet to attack the venerable cruiser – but that he disagrees with official attempts to explain what happened. In the process he confirms some of our central arguments without accepting our general conclusion and he puts forward a brand-new theory of his own which differs profoundly from Mrs Thatcher's version. The overall effect only strengthens the case we and others have made for an independent inquiry into the factors that led to the sinking of the Belgrano at a time when a peaceful settlement was in sight.

Specifically, Professor Freedman dismisses the British government's shifting explanations as a flimsy "cover story". He accepts that the attack, to put it no higher, had "an unfortunate effect" on the Peruvian peace initiative, which in fact collapsed. He concedes that the War Cabinet "should have known about" that initiative before Francis Pym, as he puts it, "eventually got round to reporting back to London". And he recognizes that the War Cabinet, on the day of the sinking on May 2, 1982, "clearly was taking a more relaxed attitude toward the negotiating process" because it was not "under the pressure that the Junta felt itself to be under to make concessions".

Freedman asserts that our investigation was intended "to add to the disquiet" caused by an act that escalated hostilities. Yet the rationale he himself offers for that attack appears to us to be even more disquieting than anything we have said or disclosed. This was an especially curious criticism to come from an academic who, on another occasion, had characterized the Belgrano sinking as "an important military victory [which] turned into a political defeat because of the premium that the international community put on the appearance of avoiding escalation" (*Foreign Affairs*, Fall 1982, p. 209). In the same article, entitled "The War of the Falkland Islands", he added: "Any military action which is not self-evidently for defensive purposes, even if it is preemptive, becomes an outrage." The rationale Freedman now presents rests on the premise that "the attack might have formed part of a coherent military strategy" (our italics); that military logic is not always subservient to political logic; and that in May 1982, the British government did not follow a political approach because, like the Junta, it could not be confident of victory.

If Freedman's reasoning is correct and Mrs Thatcher's explanations are not, then the implication has to be that Freedman believes the Prime Minister misled Parliament and the nation. Factually and philosophically there is an even more serious implication for the British people to consider if Freedman is right and Thatcher is wrong. It is that the demands of "a coherent military strategy" in contemporary crisis situations will always transcend the judgments of democratically elected leaders. Are we then to assume that the Thatcher government and its successors must be content to subordinate themselves and the British people to the military logic of their Chiefs of Staff and when the issue arises of firing cruise missiles?

Freedman is entitled to assert that his own version of why the Belgrano was sunk is the only correct one but that does not give his theory greater validity than the information, evidence and conclusions we have advanced. His contribution to the debate would have been more impressive if it had contained fewer inaccuracies and misleading statements. A random selection follows.

"The Belgrano was not sunk 'by a Mark 4 torpedo', as he says; but by two Mark 8 torpedoes".

Argentina's carrier, the flagship *Veinticinco de Mayo*, did not head for base at dawn on May 2 as he suggests, but began withdrawing the previous night after being overflown by a Sea Harrier.

"The British Task Force 'was allowed to go on the offensive' on May 1, not April 30, as he claims".

"The British Task Force 'was allowed to go on the offensive' on May 1, not April 30, as he claims".

because it had just reached the combat zone – and not, as Freedman says, because it had been held up while Alexander Haig was mediating. Argentine authorities were convinced Haig ended his mediation on April 30 precisely because the operational schedule of the Task Force was ready to be implemented.

Our investigation was in no way motivated by a "wish to direct a political attack against the government", as Freedman asserts. The starting point was similar to the truth he himself expressed in his *Foreign Affairs* article: "Nations are expected to go to war over something more than a collection of islands in an inaccessible and ineluctable part of the South Atlantic." And our curiosity was fed by the multiplicity of contradictions, inconsistencies and prevarications offered by Mrs Thatcher, members of her government and Service chiefs to explain the pivotal episode in an avoidable war that cost more than 1,000 lives, billions of pounds worth of damage and inestimable misery.

ARTHUR GAVSHON,  
 DESMOND RICE,  
 19 Stormont Road, London N6.

Sir, – Lawrence Freedman, in his review (March 9) of *The Sinking of the Belgrano* by Arthur Gavshon and Desmond Rice, states: "A conspiracy theory has developed, promoted most notably by the Labour MP Tam Dalyell, to the effect that the Belgrano was ordered to be torpedoed so as to wreck the Peruvian initiative."

Not a conspiracy theory. Just a determination to ascertain the truth about the various conflicting explanations which have been given for the sinking of the Belgrano.

In May and June 1982, albeit far from happy about the results of the sinking of the forty-four-year-old USS Phoenix, I accepted John Nott's explanations in the House of Commons to the effect that the deed had to be carried out by a submarine on the spur of the moment. It was only when Conqueror returned to Faslane in July 1982, and when her captain told reputable members of the Scottish press corps, such as Eric Mackenzie of the *Scotsman*, that he had sunk the Belgrano on "orders from Northwood" that my curiosity was awakened.

Since then we have had a cascade of mutually exclusive explanations. Threat to the Task Force carriers. The Burdwood Bank. Pincer movements, and more. Now Lawrence Freedman by invoking "General Strategy" adds to the list, contradicts Cecil Parkinson on TV-am on March 11, and produces a version of events fundamentally different from those endorsed by Mrs Thatcher.

In doing so, Freedman, unwittingly perhaps, adds to the case Gavshon and Rice deploy for a public inquiry, under the procedures laid down in the Tribunals of Inquiry (Guidance) Act of 1921.

TAM DALYELL,  
 House of Commons, London SW1.

## The Morality of Nuclear War

Sir, – It is indeed disheartening to find David Martin (February 24) seeing almost nothing of value in the United States Catholic Bishops' Pastoral Letter on War and Peace in the Nuclear Age, except for "some useful things" which are marginal: defence of the rights of conscientious objectors and "some pertinent words about not training personnel in a way that brutalizes them". (To prevent misunderstanding, let me say parenthetically that I am neither a Catholic nor a lapsed Catholic.)

Specifically, Martin's statement that the bishops' wording of the question "May a nation threaten what it may never do?" is "carelessly (or perhaps carefully) ambiguous" cannot be allowed to go unchallenged. To anyone without a prior disposition to condemn, the two "may's" patently have the same meaning. The bishops are asking: "Is it consistent with morality to threaten what it is not consistent with morality to do?" What the bishops are quite properly leaving unsaid is whether the morality implied by their "may's" is specifically Catholic, valid for all Christians, or valid for all mankind. Presumably they do not order that their question be answered only by Catholics.

The address of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, wrongly printed in last week's issue of the TLS, should have been 49 rue de la Vierge, 92120 Montrouge, France.

tion lies very close to the heart of the matter for us all. It is as far as possible from being a "cop-out".

CHARLES R. SLEETH,  
 Brooklyn College of the City University of New York, Brooklyn, New York 11210.

## Aspects of Shakespeare

Sir, – In her review (March 9) of *Shakespeare Survey*, edited by Stanley Wells, Julie Hankey mentions the transcription of the Russian actress Eugenie Leontovich's rendering of "O withered is the garland of the war" as "O weederdee degariano devar". It is surely only right to give the name of its author, James Agate, who was writing a splendidly destructive notice of a performance of *Antony and Cleopatra* in the 1930s.

In subsequent notices of productions or performances he disliked Agate was in the habit of ending with his newly coined lament: "O weederdee!"

M. J. HUGILL,  
 Westminster School, 17 Dean's Yard, London SW1.

Sir, – Julie Hankey, in her review (March 9) of *Shakespeare Survey*, notes the modification of Shakespeare's name to Shayk al-Suhair by a group of scholars in Cairo. This is not entirely by way of compliment or by way of arabicizing the Bard.

During the 1960s there was a spate of humorous claims by the Lebanese that most of the West's great men were of Lebanese origin. One such man was Shayk al-Zubeir who originally came from the Anti-Lebanon ranges and settled in England to write a few quintessentially Lebanese plays largely concerned with that most Mediterranean of qualities: passion.

As your readers may be aware, one meaning of the title "sheik" is "one who is irresistibly fascinated by women". "Zubeir" is a rather vulgar name for a diminutive penis.

F. H. MIKDAWI,  
 Faculty of Communication Studies, The Stoke High School, Maldenham Approach, Ipswich, Suffolk.

## The Wolff Catalogue

Sir, – John Sutherland, in the first sentence of his review of the second volume of the late Robert Lee Wolff's catalogue of his nineteenth-century English fiction (February 3), laments that Wolff "died before this record of his library could be completely published". Alas, he died before any of it was published. No one knew better than he how much remained to be done. No one could have brought a more formidable array of scholarly talents to the task, or have been more meticulous about it. Possibly Sutherland would have spared some of his less charitable comments had he been fully aware of this. To cite one example of several, it is both unfair and misleading to remark of one query left unanswered by Wolff that he "could have cleared this up in half a day at the Widener Library".

Of course he could, and in less than half a day – but he didn't have that half-day, nor could he know that he would not have it. Wolff's "scholarly insouciance" is Sutherland's fiction. He died untimely while his collecting was at full spate, limited mostly by the growing scarcity of material in the field. His books were shelved three-deep throughout his (appropriately) Victorian home in Cambridge, Massachusetts. His notes on the collection comprised an enormous file that he intended eventually to turn into a proper catalogue, but the file is raw material and not the finished product he would have made it. His widow, recognizing the value of the vast store of information that can be found nowhere else, courageously decided to proceed with its publication, even though it could not appear as her husband intended. I cannot feel that it would be preferable to retain it as a private file rather than to make it generally available with all the faults that its compiler would have been the first to deprecate and the ablest to remedy.

W. H. BOND,  
 Houghton Library, Harvard University, Cambridge, Massachusetts 02138.

The address of *La Nouvelle Revue Française*, wrongly printed in last week's issue of the TLS, should have been 49 rue de la Vierge, 92120 Montrouge, France.

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 Naomi Mitchison, *newsweek*

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## FICTION

DAVID WHELDON

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 Miranda Seymour, *newspaper*

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RHONA MARTIN

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THE BODLEY HEAD



## COMMENTARY

## Poetry manifested by science

Kate Flint

Julia Margaret Cameron 1815-1879  
John Hansard Gallery, University of  
Southampton, until April 28

Julia Margaret Cameron's photographic portraits are characterized by an intellectual and spiritual seriousness. Whether they show full-bearded patriarchs or heavy-lidded, pious-faced women, wreathed in a Pre-Raphaelite cloud of hair, all convey an aura of solemn sanctity. Posed against anonymously dark backgrounds, Cameron's sitters, almost always drawn from her family and friends, have their profiles and dignified foreheads accentuated by the sharply directed lighting. Occasionally melodramatic, this technique more frequently suggests a holy, angelic glow.

The spirituality of Cameron's subjects is emphasized by the lack of sharp focus. This was part of her conscious style: she was as concerned about the technicalities of her art as about her subject matter. Although not taking up photography seriously until 1863, aged nearly fifty, she had been interested in the process ever since Sir John Herschel told her of his experiments in the late 1830s. When a practitioner herself, she took advice from Rejlander: discussed the subject with Lewis Carroll. Against those who condemned her blurriness, her "slovenliness of execution", she defended "that roundness and fulness of force and feature, that modelling of flesh and limb which the focus I use only can give though called and condemned as 'out of focus'". Her work became something of a touchstone in the mid-nineteenth-century debate over the aesthetics of photography, enthused over by such critics

as Hamerton, who asserted its advantages as an expressive medium, as opposed to an instrument for documenting material fact: "The nearest approach to fine art yet made by photography has been in the remarkable photographs by Mrs Cameron . . . by putting her subjects out of focus", they are given "a massive breadth not unlike the gloom and obscurity of some old pictures". Not unlike, also, some contemporary portraiture. Mike Weaver



"The Whisper of the Muse", 1865, by Julia Margaret Cameron. From the exhibition reviewed here, and reproduced in its catalogue (160pp. John Hansard Gallery/The Herbert Press. £3.75 paperback, 0 85432236 1, at the exhibition only; otherwise £9.95 hardback, 0 90696935 2).

er, in his well-chosen, well-documented exhibition at Southampton, has hung several of Watts's Venetian-indebted canvases. Of Tennyson, of Sir Henry Taylor, of Browning, to make just this point. These men were also captured, in their expressions of visionary intensity, by Cameron. Like Watts, she interpreted as well as recording. Tennyson, for example, appears in his everyday clothes, gazing at the lens with sublime solemnity. But, more remarkably, he is also found in artist's cap, in the manner of Van Dyck; as a dirty, unkempt medieval monk; and, helmeted, a sad but noble stare in his eye, as the King Arthur of his own *Idylls*, "moving ghost-like to his dream".

Weaver's text in the book which accompanies the exhibition is valuable where it draws attention to the typological interpretation which was habitual to Cameron, and links her photography to the interest held by many Victorians in the religious subjects of the High Renaissance. He accompanies many of the reproductions with apt quotations, especially from Anna Jameson's *Legends of the Madonna*, and her *Sacred and Legendary Art*. Whether choosing biblical or poetic themes, Cameron invariably selected moments of great emotional intensity: the angel at the sepulchre; the sorrowful parting of Sir Lancelot and Queen Guinevere; a young virgin looking heavenwards on St Agnes's Eve. In illustrating Patmore's *The Angel in the House*, it could be argued that she is lending support to the vision of succouring yet suppressed womanhood which his adulation of the sanctity of marriage conveys. But, like so many of Cameron's female portraits, this woman is seen in strong isolation. In her work, the submissive postures of directly contemporary paintings, such as

Hicks's "Woman's Mission", are not to be found. Weaver makes a claim for her as a "feminine", rather than a "feminist" artist, largely on the grounds that she derived personal sustenance from Christian ideals of maternity and marriage. The terms in which he writes of her belie any serious interest in this aspect of her work. "She was a nice-looking woman, who was a fine person", he asserts, and then, much later, claims that, given Cameron's particular society, it was inevitable that, in her photographs, "women would not be cast as the heroes that men were". Yet to claim this is to concentrate on the ostensible subject, and deny the power of the photographs themselves. The representations of Rebecca, of Boudicca, Sappho, Hypatia and innumerable types of Madonnas and infants give us a gallery of positive images of women who are self-controlled, standing alone in their moral and physical beauty, resisting the softening moulds of male conventions. Cameron's plates may approach the sentimental, as with "The Kiss of Peace" - between two women - or with mothers gazing over their sleeping children. But the sentiment is sorrowful rather than cloying. Even such a potentially dangerous subject as "Venus Chiding Cupid and Removing his Wings" is conveyed, somewhat disturbingly, as an act of necessary, if tragic, punitive sadism: there is no desire to giggle at the absurdity of past taste. For Cameron had no desire for an easy, graphic depiction of moral commonplace. Her spiritual commitment was bound in with high aesthetic ideals. With painting in mind, Watts once remarked that "Art is poetry manifested by science". Cameron's work seems a continuous attempt to realize this maxim by means of the camera.

## Cruel talk

HAROLD PINTER  
One for the Road  
Lyric Studio, Hammersmith

Harold Pinter's *One for the Road*, which he has directed for performance at lunchtimes in the Lyric Studio, looks intensely and harrowing, but with his accustomed stringency, at the psychology and language of torture: it is *engaged* theatre at its best.

Pinter *engaged*? Well, up to a point. Melancholy induced by the state of things, commitment to CND and Amnesty International - these have been adequately publicized, and in them Pinter is following a familiar path for a writer. But the special acuity of *One for the Road* (specially designed by Tim Bickerton, faultlessly acted by Alan Bates as Nicholas the torturer; Roger Lloyd Pack as the "educated, intelligent" and helpless Victor, his victim; Jenny Quayle as Gila, Victor's wife, and Steven Kember as their son) is to remove action and speech from the awful but, in the end, numbing actualities of the "Prisoners of Conscience" column and place them on an abstract plane of pure cruelty: to evoke a logic or metaphysics of degradation that is self-creating and self-delighting. Victor looks much the worse for wear, but all Nicholas does to him, of course, is talk: there are the predictable, militaristic, moralistic pieties, there are real hatred and contempt, and much less bearable sexual taunts; there is some even nastier talk of the "little prick", their son - fears engendered here, are justified by the play's terrible last words. Gila receives much the same treatment, with special emphasis on the son, and the "entertainment" she provides for Nicholas's soldiers, his "boys".

Behind her and Victor's nearly speechless writhings and squirmings there may be sensed the unspeakable truths of this or that particular country, and cause, but in Nicholas's suave and elegant enjoyment of his own mad clichés - "one for the road" being the least offensive, even as it is offered to the nearly-dead Victor with a glass of Scotch - there is something both more general and chillingly specific. There is, perhaps, an unintentional cliché or two. The torturer always psychopathically unstable? Does he always demand that his victim love him? It may be so.

The Department of Education and Science is offering research studentships in librarianship and information science. Application forms may be had from the Office of Arts and Libraries, Great Clove Way, London SW1.

## Inner and outer space

Richard Combs

The Right Stuff  
Various cinemas

There is a basic contradiction at the heart of *The Right Stuff*, the film, which should have scuttled its chances of making a successful adaptation of Tom Wolfe's book: a contradiction which has nothing to do with the things one might think unfilmable in Wolfe's account of the Mercury man-in-space programme - and of the test-pilot brotherhood from which the astronauts sprang, but which had difficulty taking the programme seriously and looked down on the men who were actually in space themselves. Wolfe's account necessarily includes a lot of technical detail - though instructively presented - and while full of drama it is not held together by dramatic structure but by journalistic energy (tending to the religious, in Wolfe's incantatory, repetitive writing). As important as the description of the astronauts' feats is the history of military flying since the Second World War, and the revelation that test-piloting in jet planes qualified as space travel while the Mercury missions were still having an embarrassing time getting off the ground. Aeronautical history does not make for straightforward drama, and if the large cast of characters has a single hero it is probably the shadowy Chuck Yeager, breaker of the sound barrier and test-pilot extraordinary, who had nothing to do with the Mercury programme.

But the film handles all this wayward material with considerable, fresh and witty aplomb.

## A second go

David Trotter

HENRY JAMES  
The Aspern Papers  
Theatre Royal, Haymarket

Venice tended to provoke James to small epics of gingerliness. There is, he wrote, "no refinement of the mouldy rococo, in human or whatever other form, that you may not disembark at the dislocated water-steps of almost any decayed monument of Venetian greatness in auspicious quest of". We might deduce from his attenuated syntax that the nature of such quests is likely to be changed out of recognition by the delays and obstacles they encounter.

So it is for the narrator of *The Aspern Papers*. Confident that both his person and his quest are auspicious, he takes possession of the decayed monument of Miss Bordereau's house. Yet he cannot take possession of the papers; and the longer they are withheld, the less certain does he become of his reasons for being there. Meanwhile the shadowy and reclusive Miss Bordereau rises suddenly to the most unequivocal of motives: money. The narrator has eventually to take himself back out into the city, where he always gets "inextricably lost".

Michael Redgrave's adaptation of the story

## AUTHOR, AUTHOR

Competition No 166  
Readers are invited to identify the sources of the three quotations which follow and to send us the answers so that they reach this office not later than April 13. A prize of £10 is offered for the first correct set of answers opened on that date, or falling that the most nearly correct - in which case inspired guesswork will also be taken into consideration.

Entries, marked "Author, Author 166" on the envelope, should be addressed to the Editor, *The Times Literary Supplement*, Priory House, St John's Lane, London EC1M 4BX. The solution and results will appear on April 20.

1 He sinks shots one-handed, underhanded, flat-footed, and out of the pivot, jump and set. Flat and soft the ball lifts. That his touch still lives in his hands elates him. He feels liberated from long gloom. But his body is weighty and his breath grows short. It annoys him that he gets winded.

Without being indeterminate or diffuse in style, it catches the changeable tone of its source: journalism-cum-commentary-cum-philosophical-ruminations. Essentially, it treats the astronauts and pilots with respect - even while doing journalistic duty by reporting their wars - and goes all out for burlesque in its treatment of the scampering clowns of the government and the media. In the first case, they are seen creating a space bandwagon in the name of national prestige when Sputnik bursts upon them and, in the second, going through a Keystone Cop routine to clamber aboard. Wolfe probably has his best moments describing the press scramble to "cover" the astronauts, presenting the newsmen as a corporate Victorian proper gent who was diffident (for all his clamorousness) about questioning the star voyagers' wholesome apple-pie image. The film's larkiness emerges in its picture of a flummoxed American administration, falling over itself to find suitable astronaut candidates to duel with the Russians (they view footage of stock-car racers, surf-board riders, and so on), with Lyndon Johnson as the chief thump-utter, uttering his historic phrase about the need to claim the "high ground" of space. The neatest effect, perhaps, is the brief, tinted footage of the Russians mysteriously, even omnisciently, at work: their anonymous "Grand Designer" is played by the venerable screenwriter Edward Anhalt, just as the American ace Yeager is, superbly, by the "new" American playwright Sam Shepard. That the film exactly catches Wolfe's tone here might be ascribed to the fact that Wolfe's passages on

sacrifices this infinitely recessed environment. It also tends to replace the unsteady strengthening and weakening of motive by a rather too obvious theatricality. Christopher Reeve's Henry Jarvis is more callous, and more consistently knowing, than James's narrator. His gestures are largely confined to Victorian High Pensive (finger on lips, two fingers along sideboard, thumb and middle finger delousing eyebrow), with the occasional spasm of touch-down euphoria when the papers seem to be in his grasp. His method of applying for a reader's ticket is to faint in the middle of the archive and come round within fondling distance of the junior librarian. (Seems to work, though: the last time Vanessa Redgrave looked so radiant was playing that fruit-machine in *Yanks*.) On the whole, all Reeve has to do is to appear detachedly Byronic, and remind himself every now and then that he's not performing in a novel by Martin Amis.

Wendy Hiller's Miss Bordereau is a crusty but stalwart old lady of the kind given to squeezing worlds of meaning out of an "indeed" or a "precisely". (Tension mounts as we wonder what will happen to the word "gondola" when it appears - which, by the law of Venetian averages, it must do sooner or later.)

Both performances are effective in their way, without really suggesting that they were

him such are precisely those which make a good workman - steadiness, sobriety, and activity. Samuel Long might pass for the beau ideal of the two characters. Happy were we to possess him!

Competition No 162  
Winner: W. A. Davenport  
Answers:

1 The day is now well advanced. And yet it is perhaps a little too soon for my song. To sing it too soon is fatal. I always find. On the other hand it is possible to leave it too late.

Samuel Beckett, *Happy Days*, act 2.  
2 "I may sing now", he replied, and did.  
His thin voice rose, and gave out one sound after another. At times there seemed rhythm, at times there was an illusion of a Western melody. But the ear, baffled repeatedly, soon lost any clue, and wandered in a maze of noises, none harsh or unpleasant, none intelligible.

E. M. Forster, *A Passage to India*, chapter 7.  
3 The time said, more or less, how Eve, gathering her robes about her, stands reluctant still to let her dowry mantle fall. The herded flocks, the tame complacent, in pastures green, and the wild, the industrious man in the parish; the habits which make

## COMMENTARY



Tennyson as King Arthur, from the exhibition reviewed on the facing page.

The Russians "read" like a clip from *Metro-polis*. The major contradiction within the film; however, is the right stuff itself. It is, as Wolfe is at pains to point out, something that is never discussed, even acknowledged by the subjects themselves: the question of what makes a good pilot. It is an ineffable quality that Wolfe works hardest, most metaphorically, at summing up as, roughly, a combination of derring-do, cool nerve and technical know-how. Things unspoken, however, are not so easy to introduce in a movie like this which, faithful as it is to the book, is not documentary in the same way nor as personal (it doesn't have Wolfe's "voice"). In fact, the film's strongest quality, a kind of visual confrontation of mythologies (Yeager, on horseback, watches the fuelling in the desert of the rocket plane with which he will break the sound barrier), tends to lead it, in majestic silence, away from Wolfe, who talks compulsively and emphatically, italics and exclamation marks coming in for heavy wear. He talks, moreover, not just about observable things but their interior impact: inner space, or metaphoric space, is the real domain of the New Journalism, and in this Wolfe is quite similar to Norman Mailer, who matched the reach of the moon shot with his interior speculation in *A Fire on the Moon*. *The Right Stuff*, the book, talks about the soul no less than it does about space.

Given the technological epic that it is, with the special effects farmed out to innumerable organizations and craftsmen (Jordan Belson, a respected experimental film-maker in his own

right, provided the vistas of outer space), one would not even expect the film to have a distinctive voice of its own. But the director, Philip Kaufman, whose work has always tended to be stylistically and thematically diverse (if not ill-assorted), puts eclecticism to good use here. There is even a sense in which his cunning shifts of mood, the casting about to found a new genre for the new heroes of space, take the place of Wolfe's speculations on the right stuff. Kaufman has always seemed too unfocused when trying to work out new angles from within established genres, whether Western (*The Great Northfield Minnesota Raid*) or science fiction (*Invasion of the Body Snatchers*). But *The Right Stuff* doesn't look unfocused; it seems to be continually posing the question of where it belongs in this spectrum - science fiction, Western, or something rather more unlikely. When John Glenn refuses to bow to PR pressure, and tells his wife (who has a bad stutter) that she doesn't have to appear on television with Lyndon Johnson, he is backed in his stand by his hitherto fractious fellow astronauts. They then march off in a group, even elbowing NASA officials aside, for all the world as if they had swaggered in from another Kaufman film, his street-gang saga, *The Wanderers*. Each to his own mythology, perhaps: Wolfe surmises that the astronauts drew their powerful appeal from a kind of race memory, that they were reincarnations of the medieval single-combat warriors whose prowess in battle decided the fate of nations: Kaufman casts them in an updated version of one of the American cinema's hardest genres of a similar jockeying and jousting, a kind of *West Side Story* in space.

## BUTTERWORTHS SERIES IN CONSERVATION AND MUSEOLOGY

## The Conservation of Wall Paintings

Paolo More and Laura More,  
Chief Conservators, Istituto Centrale del Restauro, Rome, Italy

Paul Philippot, Professor at Université Libre de Bruxelles, Belgium

The original French edition of this book was received with so much interest by conservators and art historians alike that it became obvious that an English translation should be published to bring its unique contents before the wider English-speaking audience.

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# Between pastoral and political

Christopher Haigh

PATRICK COLLINSON  
 Godly People: Essays on English Protestantism and Puritanism  
 589pp. Hambledon Press. £24.  
 0 907628 15 X

"Concerning the name, it is ambiguous, and so it is fallacious." Giles Widdowes was commenting on the word "puritan" in 1631, but his warning applies equally to "revisionist" as used in contemporary historical polemic. In the pages of the *American Historical Review*, Richard Greaves attacks Patrick Collinson as an "extreme revisionist", while Conrad Russell places views such as Collinson's "so much in the mainstream as to command almost universal assent". Clearly, we have learned little from the recent debates on "puritanism", for this new argument over "revisionism" is conducted with much the same tactics and terms. All that is now needed to complete the parallel is a moderating intervention from Collinson himself. "A Comment: Touching the Name Revisionist", in which he might say, as he did of puritanism, that the revisionism was in the eye of the beholder – though this time he could not tell us that among themselves revisionists are known as "godly professor".

As the description of Collinson's interpretation becomes, briefly, as contentious an issue as puritanism itself, it is opportune to have a collection of the first twenty of his papers, published initially between 1958 and 1980. They include his analyses of *A Brief Discourse of the Troubles Begonne at Frankfurt* (1958) and Thomas Wood's letters (1960); his assessments of leading puritan militants such as John Field (1961) and Edward Dering (1965); his reminders of the links between English and foreign Protestants (in essays on Bucer, sabbatarianism and the Stranger Churches); and case studies of conflict between magistracy and ministry (focused on Grindall) and their cooperation (the example of Suffolk). With typical stylish modesty, Collinson calls these pieces "the casual litter strewn in the wake of half a lifetime of research", but among them are some of the most important and innovative forays into the history of the post-Reformation Church of England published since the war. Their republication should be warmly welcomed, especially as they have been scattered through Festschriften and less-obvious journals.

On this bulky evidence, we may try Collinson on the charges lately made against him, of inconsistency (that his "views have altered in the last few years") and of extremism. On the first count, it is striking how far his more recent studies work out the implications of his earlier statements and substantiate them. In "The Godly", an essay printed now after circulating for almost twenty years in dog-eared typescripts, Collinson set out opinions on the relationship of puritanism to "mere protestantism", on the divisive impact of preaching and on the role of voluntarism within English Protestantism, which led inexorably to later essays and to *The Religion of Protestants* (1982). Collinson has added a note to this paper, in which he confesses "some shifts in my own thinking" and admits "that I am less inclined than I once was, to regard protestantism/puritanism as solvent of parochial religion". But although the new emphasis (and the convergence) is significant (and revisionist), the essential continuities remain and "the corrosive, divisive effects" are still acknowledged. In another seminal survey of 1966, "Episcopacy and Reform", Collinson mapped out the pioneering path, which was to lead through his studies of "Grindallian episcopacy" to the same destination: *The Religion of Protestants*.

As each new book and article appears, another stone is laid in a compelling edifice. If the central conclusions are much the same, so too is some of the evidence, for Collinson is a master of the re-usable quotation and the recycled example. Indeed, a less fastidious scholar would have simply published his 1957 London PhD thesis (probably in annual instalments to accommodate its vastness), and so avoided a lot of hard work. We would thereby have missed the maturing authority, subtlety and style with which his themes are elaborated, and which are especially manifest in work

issued since 1975. Here, in form rather than content, there is change. The later essays are relaxed, discursive and allusive, the prose ever more sermon-like with its biblical metaphors and references: little wonder Collinson is so much in demand for commemorative lectures and Festschrift essays.

On the second charge, alleged extremism, the prosecution's evidence is no stronger. A historian whose hallmarks are eclecticism and eirenicism is hardly an "extreme revisionist", and one who dedicates a volume to the memory of Sir John Neale may not be revisionist at all – Collinson himself rejects the label "revisionist". It is true that he warns against misreading from the perspective of 1642, and interprets oppositionist puritanism as second-generation Protestant evangelism. It is also true that he stresses the coherence and stability of the Jacobean Church, and points to the disruptive late impact of Arminianism. But he has been careful to distance himself from those he regards as revisionists, and he argues in his preface that "revisionism will have gone too far if it forgets the existence of John Field and ignores the militant and genuinely revolu-

tionary programme of the extreme wing of Elizabethan Puritanism." Although he has in some respects redefined its significance, Collinson does not ignore or explain away conflict over religion; indeed, one of his main achievements has been, with others, to liberate the growth of English Protestantism from the restrictions of the official English Reformation, and so make tensions between pastoral and political priorities more comprehensible.

Collinson's enemies, in this collection and in other writings, are not Whig (or even neo-Whig) historians, but authoritarian bishops such as Whitgift and Laud and propagandist writers such as Bancroft and Heylyn. He appears to struggle to free his puritans less from the misunderstandings of historians who have misread strains within the post-Reformation Church than from the misrepresentations of contemporaries who sought to brand all puritans as presbyterians and all Calvinists as revolutionaries. So in his essay on John Field he shows that presbyterians were a small, but well-organized, minority, able to seize the leadership of their clerical colleagues only in times of crisis; and in a paper on "Lectures by

Combination" he argues that associations and institutions regarded by critics as subversive were practical solutions to pastoral difficulties. From Collinson's perspective, therefore, the disruptive forces in English Protestantism were not puritans at all, but Elizabeth I, Parker, Whitgift, Bancroft, Charles I and, above all, William Laud – cast once more as scapegoat for the Civil War. The heroes, by contrast, are Grindall, Abbot and Toby Matthew, who sought to reconcile the sometimes conflicting demands of order and evangelism, and to give to tender consciences concessions made appropriate by a pastoral imperative.

Such perceptions and suggestions are illuminating and constructive: they are not extremist, and Collinson does not hold what William Bradshaw (in 1605) almost described as "the main opinions of the rigidest sort of those that are called revisionists in the realm of England". If this valuable and attractive collection of essays is to be dismissed as mere revisionism, then, as Thomas Fuller nearly said, "I could wish that the word revisionist were banished common discourse, because so various in the acceptations thereof."

started as commoners but got to the top in political life became peers in the course of doing so. But because successful politicians, judges and royal favourites attained peerages, and because others were either born into the nobility or succeeded to titles, it by no means necessarily follows that the House of Lords as an institution was always more powerful and important than the Commons, even setting aside the years 1642 or 1645 to 1660. Some needless and on occasion heated controversy could be avoided if this were more often kept in mind.

Neither the nobility as a social group nor the upper house as an institution have been entirely neglected by historians. L. O. Pike's *A Constitutional History of the House of Lords* (1894) is still consulted by specialists. C. H. Firth's *The House of Lords during the Civil War* (1910) was a remarkable by-product of the Parliament Bill crisis and affords living proof that contemporary controversy can sometimes stimulate first-class scholarship; it is really a history of the peerage in politics from 1603 to 1660, and incidentally the most structural or "proto-Namierite" of all Firth's books. Lawrence Stone's *The Crisis of the Aristocracy 1558-1641* (1965), while it remains open to criticism in one aspect for its continued partial reliance on the "counting of manors", is by common consent one of the major historical achievements of our time. In addition there are numerous essays, articles and unpublished theses, most if not quite all of which are noted by Elizabeth Read Foster in her new book. Professor Foster has herself been publishing works on parliamentary history for over twenty years, and this volume represents the summation of her labours. It is also an unintended memorial to the late Maurice Bond who did so much, through his long tenure as Clerk of the Records, to make the House of Lords Record Office into an archive repository indeed worthy of the "mother of parliaments". It is very sad that he has not lived to see the appearance of this book, in which his help is hard-ly solely acknowledged.

The subtitle explains precisely what the reader should expect. It would be unfair to criticize the author because of what she has not tried to do, for the book she has not set out to write. A full-scale history of the House of Lords from 1603 to 1649, using materials which were not available to Firth, and likewise a general study of the peers in politics, especially as patrons, both remain to be undertaken. Foster is not a showy or fashionable kind of historian. Probably only others who have worked in similar fields will appreciate fully the excellence of her scholarship and the soundness of her judgments. Among the most original and interesting sections are those on the judges as "assistants" to the House of Lords, but not of it; on the process of differentiation between the various types of committees; select standing joint and of the whole house; on the use and decline of conferences between representatives or delegates; perhaps they

should be called – from the two Houses; and on the development and functions of the different kinds of jurisdiction exercised by the House. Especially remarkable is the number of cases or petitions which came to the Lords in effect as a court of first instance.

Although this is not a chronological history, it seems idle to deny the word "decline" to the House of Lords during the years 1642-8. This was largely a matter of numbers. If more peers had stayed at Westminster, that is to say had not been royalists or else had not simply opted out, then the Lords would have continued to play a greater part in political affairs and – by the same token – the English Civil War would have been other than it was. The allegiances, or more comprehensively the ideological preferences and priorities of the peers, surely determined the fate of their House, rather than the reverse. And even under the Republic, while the years of single-chamber parliaments from 1649 to 1657 saw the legal privileges of peers extinguished, their titles and rights of inheritance remained untouched.

Given the book's authoritative character, there are a few slips which should not have got past the author and her publishers. I should personally have welcomed fuller discussion of Charles I's curious experiment when he summoned the peers to York in their capacity as the King's Great Council in September 1640. As to the peers spiritual, the separate nomination of bishops to most committees ensured their relative over-representation. And it may have reflected the lingering concept that the upper house embodied two distinct estates of the realm in the peers spiritual and temporal. Then from early 1642 they were excluded altogether. Since this was an act of parliament to which – however reluctantly – the king gave his assent, it was not automatically negated at the Restoration; thus episcopal membership of the Lords had to await a separate statute in 1661.

The defeats of the Lords, or at least their failure to press their cases over money bills in 1614 and again in the spring of 1640, taken together with their successful redefinition of their judicial role from 1621 onwards, may be said to prefigure the division of power and responsibility between the two Houses which obtained for most of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Only the unwisdom of the Unionist peers from the 1880s, culminating in the foolishness of 1909-10, was to begin over again the process which has brought us once more to the brink of having a single-chamber parliament. One may agree with Firth and other conservative-minded historians that the Commonwealth provides a poor advertisement for unicameralism, but still feel that only the most consistently prudent, restrained and even altruistic exercise of its powers could ever justify the hereditary nature of the upper house, either in the past or today. Meanwhile anyone who wishes to understand what the House of Lords was really like under the early Stuarts will now be able to turn with confidence to a guide who is as sensible as she is learned.

# Understanding the upheavals

T. J. Reed

GERHARD SCHULZ  
 Die Deutsche Literatur zwischen Französischer Revolution und Restauration: Band VII/1  
 763pp. Munich: Beck. DM48.  
 3 406 00727 9

This book, a first part-volume of two, continues the de Boor-Newald history of German literature broken off when Richard Newald died more than a quarter-century ago. That is long enough to have affected the way history is written, and new waves there have indeed been. In particular, there was the emphasis on politics and ideology, sometimes discovered in surprising places, and on the entire social process of communication, from the writer's pen via commerce to the very diverse reading public. Texts to match these preoccupations have been rescued and republished, from the Jacobin poets to the popular producers of "trivial literature". While these were getting compensation for their long neglect, there was less time and sympathy for the previously accepted great, unless they qualified under the new rules (eg, the "revolutionary" Hölderlin); if they did not, they were liable to rejection (eg, the "conservative" Goethe). The reaction against the traditional scholarship which celebrated formal values in isolation from the social infrastructure made literary quality as previously understood socially and ideologically suspect. For a writer to have made good was next door to being reactionary, reputation was a liability, failure and past rejection a prerequisite for canonization; the study of communicative structures at the bottom end of the market was as valuable as anything else where "value" itself was a dubious concept. The critical tone was predominantly grudging, even griggish. The dark shadow over German history crept across literature too, which was reproached for sins of omission if not of active complicity.

The usefulness of fashions lies in their exaggerations. They move us an inch by demanding a yard and alter the balance of our view by forcing on the attention things that were formerly taken for granted – which may mean, in practice, ignored. Gerhard Schulz's book duly looks rather different from what an account of this period would have been twenty-

five years ago. The mere choice of the political events of 1789 and 1815 as the end markers for his period is a significant departure from Newald's preceding volume which went up to the "internal" literary landmark of Goethe's Italian journey. (It would be pedantic to point out that three years have consequently fallen down the crack between the volumes, were it not that with them has gone Goethe's journey itself: this series now does not contain any account of one of the most decisive and most eloquently recorded episodes in German cultural history.)

But the extreme politico-ideological fashion is now past. Schulz restores the proper respect for great achievements, working with an unashamed criterion of poetic complexity and quality. But he derives the criterion in part from the realities that lie behind literature and to which it was a response: society, historical events, political as well as aesthetic theorizing, the residue of traditional Enlightenment aims, and those new half-prophetic aspirations to transform society and the spiritual life of Europe which the upheavals of the age generated. His very full account of these things is not there as "background", for the reader to relate to literature as he will; it is a basis for judging the works that responded to them. Schulz gives the terms "trivial" and "high" literature a functional sense by setting popular pseudo-solutions beside more complex attempts to understand and shape the world. "High" certainly does not mean "remote". Surveys of the range of German responses to the Revolution itself, and then to Charlotte Corday's murder of Marat, give a preliminary calibration as well as an opportunity for analysing the gamut of attitudes to violence and terrorism – one of the recurrent themes of the period which have remained topical.

Even the lesser treatments of Marat's assassin and other themes drawn from events in France were not literature for literature's sake, and only in writers like Lafontaine and Kotzebue does writing shade into the pursuit of sales and professional success, something subtly different from the traditional poetic aspirations to fame; so that one of the strongest impressions the book leaves is of the compulsion under which the serious writers of the age worked, of the urgency of their writing as a

conscious and distinctively German contribution to Europe's problems. The very impossibility of affecting their own ramshackle and retarded society sharpened their vision; lacking a body politic of their own turned them into physicians for a continent.

In the process, they became the most active literary and intellectual force of the day, as was recognized by their French and English contemporaries. It is good that Schulz reasserts this view, as a corrective to German criticisms which accuse this formally sophisticated literature of failing to engage reality at all, and its exponents of being (according to taste) escapist, elitist or corrupt. What is true – and the juxtaposition of "trivial" and "high" literature brings it out sharply – is that the more artistically and intellectually complex responses did not get through to a large audience. Hundreds read or saw the works of Lafontaine and Kotzebue for every one on whom the ideas of Schiller impinged, or Goethe, or Novalis. But that is not an indictment of the latter group. Some art is difficult because life is difficult. That was plain to Schiller when he wrote that the task of educating through art was a task for more than one century. The gap between the generators of new ideas or forms and the society they aspire to reach and influence is a permanent fact of life, not something for which a particular generation of German writers can be taken to task.

Schulz realistically accepts this, from the moment he first stresses the intellectuality of German writing in this period to the closing section which finds Hölderlin pleading (though no one at this time is listening) for the possibility that action may yet come from thought and "the books . . . live". That is an improvement on the previous standard ways of seeing this age of artistic efflorescence. The early "imperial" idea was that it had aptly anticipated the great nation of 1871 and could properly be a national possession ("a fanfare of vanity occasionally blown at the frontier", as Nietzsche said of the exploitation of Goethe's greatness). That was a falsification because the humane past was used (and is used, Schulz adds) when German politics were at their most inhuman. Then there is the view Heine popularized, that the spiritual ferment in Germany after 1789 was an intellectual substitute for a real revolu-

tion, what Jean Paul called "storming the Bastille from within". Schulz dismisses this as both patronizing and wrongly implying that revolution is the "ideal and most virtuous mode of historical action". The first overlooks the conflict between high ideals and low actions; the second keeps ideas separate while looking forward cryptically (in Heine's version) to some sudden explosive fulfilment; while the more recent rejections of an "elitist" literature beg all questions about what literature is and should do. Schulz's conception might help Germans to live on more equitable terms with some of their greatest writers. Certainly, to see these brought together in a single picture is a powerful reminder of how much they still have to say about the aberrations of mass industrial society as it has developed since their day.

One objection: in creating that single picture, Schulz has played down differences – schools, alliances, enmities, Classic and Romantic. Yet reluctance to define and name, and the dissolving of "Romantic" into something vague and unmanageable, does not prevent precise similarities showing up between "Romantic" writers, and patterns of divergence between them and "Classicalists". This was a radical parting of the ways, the consequences of which Europe has lived with ever since.

Still, there is more to appreciate than to criticize in this book. Its interpretations of individual works do not drop into the blandness of a work of reference, the information is voluminous and precise, the proportions are judicious and – all credit to the publishers – ample. Best of all, the style is unpretentious and readable. Whether in the German academic context one calls that revolution or restoration, it is very welcome.

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April, 8 1/2 x 11", 340 pp., illus., cloth £38.00  
 UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN PRESS  
 1 Gower Street  
 London WC1

erial. And, unlike its Hollywood counterpart, it will be no comedy.

Pike's main theme is Brecht's reaction to Stalin and Stalinism. He mixes sharp, accusatory questions and lengthy documentation, potentially uneasy partners, and he does not equivocate: Brecht stands condemned for persistent sins of omission, for relativizing Stalin's crimes through "verbiage about the dialectic". The case against Brecht is obviously anything but closed. John Willett reminds us of an earlier stage in the controversy, in particular his own fruitless attempts to elicit from Hannah Arendt chapter-and-verse corroboration for her much publicized claim that Brecht had praised Stalin's crimes. But neither this controversy nor any other is central to Willett's book, indeed his recapitulation of the Arendt affair is simply one of the concluding "excursions" and "after-notes", which include early theatre-reviews and jottings on Brechtian terminology and which, because they reveal little of Brecht's "context", bring the book to an unfocused close.

The context which Willett has in mind during much of his book is not political, even though, at a certain level, Brecht's creativity, as Willett acknowledges, is inseparable from his politics. There are in fact a variety of contexts, and Willett, valuing the untidiness and the open-endedness, does not try to create order out of the extraordinary and often unpredictable cluster of Brecht's overt sources and covert affinities. Brecht is adept at covering his tracks – the story of his reading Edgar Wallace wrapped up in a dust-jacket of *Das Kapital* suggests as much – and Willett is adept at uncovering them. In this he has two advantages – an ear, not least a translator's ear, for Brecht's many voices; and an irrepressible personal knowledge of many of those who made up Brecht's assembly line of sources.

## Raising the dust

Philip Brady

JOHN FUEGEL, GISELA BAHR and JOHN WILLETT (Editors)  
 Beyond Brecht: Über Brecht hinaus  
 The Brecht Yearbook, Volume 11  
 260pp. Wayne State University Press (distributed in the UK by TABS). \$22.  
 0 8143 1735 9  
 JOHN WILLETT  
 Brecht in Context: Comparative Approaches  
 274pp. Methuen. £12.50.  
 0 413 50410 7

On Brecht – a recent correspondence in these pages is a reminder – the dust has not yet settled. Sadly, it often seems that it is not the dramatist or the poet who raises the dust but Brecht himself, whose oblique or tantalizingly understated self-revelations provoke questions which have more to do with the nature and consistency of his political commitments than with the quality of his literary work. Was his dislike of the United States compounded as much of pique as of principle? How far did his admiration of Stalin go? How far did professional opportunism steer him to East Germany and keep him there?

These are old questions and if they stay alive it is not simply because Brecht keeps eluding his pursuers but because new material can still yield new insights. Thus, the two most important essays in *Beyond Brecht* use new material to throw light on some very dark corners indeed. In the one case James K. Lyon reports on the fascinating rag-bag of fact and fancy which the FBI files on Brecht, in the other David Pike chronicles Brecht's "running battle" with the hardline German Kulturpolitiker in Moscow. If the play *Tales from Moscow* ever came to be written, it will need Pike's material to guide who is as sensible as she is learned.







# Sources of light

Tim Dooley

**Gael Turnbull**  
*A Gathering of Poems: 1950-1980*  
 175pp. Anvil. £7.95 (paperback, £4.95).  
 £4.95.  
 0856460877

There have been signs recently that attempts are being made to sort out those poets of individuality and seriousness who emerged in the publishing and publicity explosion of the late 1960s "underground" from the general mediocrity of that scene. Interest in the work of the late John Riley and the attention given to the collected poems of Roy Fisher, Ken Smith and J. H. Prynne were signs that a belated process of sifting might have begun. If the publication of Gael Turnbull's *A Gathering of Poems* constitutes evidence of a revival, it is a revival to be welcomed.

Gael Turnbull's early poems show a debt to William Carlos Williams, but perhaps more particularly to his Objectivist admirers like George Oppen. Turnbull's is a poetry that attempts to reveal meanings and forms latent in the material world, and eschews a wilful imposition of the artist's concerns. This approach leads Turnbull to dismiss "the mere contriving / of better mousetraps" in favour of "an architecture of / pauses". It also leads him to a respect for the chance patterns of nature, expressed with characteristic scruple in "Thanks".

Thanks, and praise for  
 this knot in the wood

across the grain  
 making the carpenter curse

where a branch sprang out  
 carrying sap to each leaf.

Turnbull's work is unusual in combining the influences of American- and French writers. "Homage to Jean Follain" reveals a source for his occasionally surreal selection and concentration of imagery, and a quotation from Apollinaire precedes a group of prose poems which turn everyday observations and *idées reçues* to bizarre yet purposeful fantasy:

A number of ancient customs are still observed in  
 this part  
 of the world but none is more curious than the  
 yearly  
 capture of a joy.

That is, a wild one. Some are still natural in the  
 country  
 districts. By tradition the whole town participates  
 in the  
 pursuit. Crowds come from great distances to  
 watch, as  
 except for circus specimens, they know them only  
 by  
 description.

There is evidence, too, of the influence of Raymond Queneau in a project such as "A World / A Phrase" - the long poem of isolated nouns and short phrases, of which Turnbull writes: "Any of the one hundred and twelve phrases may relate to any of the twenty-eight nouns. The order is random. This version is no less final than any other."

This poet obviously believes, as he writes in a poem praising Turner, that "Accidents can be very useful"; but "A Word / A Phrase" offers too little sustained control over the random to avoid banality. The longer sequence "Twenty Words, Twenty Days" is the product of a more fruitful experiment with arbitrary form. Each of the poems, written on twenty consecutive days in late 1963, leads up to or away from a word taken by chance for that day from a dictionary. Within this framework, Turnbull draws together aspects of his own life as doctor, husband, father, publisher, poet and friend - interspersing observations on his reading or on public events with thoughts and feelings about the nature of art. The effect is various but coherent. An underlying theme emerges of service to an ideal vision of purity - a quality which Turnbull identifies in Turner's watercolours and Bunyan's *Grace Abounding* but also, perhaps less expectedly, in mundane objects such as the Wankel engine.

Like both Roy Fisher and Basil Bunting, whose work his *Migrant Press* published, or distributed in the early 1960s, Turnbull is a poet

who exploits the approaches of international modernism while retaining a sense of locality, an unashamed provincialism, which is recognizably British. In particular he evokes two border areas in his poems: the area of the English and Scottish borders which he associates with childhood and his ancestors, and the Malvern hills in Worcestershire where he has lived since 1964. His interest in locality is matched by an interest in early history as seen in poems like "Five from the sagas" or "An Irish Monk on Lindisfarne about 650 A.D."

These concerns come together in "Residues: Down the Sluice of Time", a long poem (first published in 1976 by the *Grosseteste Review*) which, rather in the manner of Williams's *Paterson*, builds up a personal and historical vision from a collage of fragmentary perceptions and records. Turnbull's poem collects images of suffering, death and individuals' attempts to make something of their lives

## Fugitive truths

Lachlan Mackinnon

**Hal Summers**  
*The Burning Book and Other Poems*  
 42pp. The Book Guild. £3.95.

086332004 X  
**Alan Dixon**  
*The Immaculate Magpies*  
 54pp. Poet and Printer. £3.90 (paperback, £1.80).

0900597313  
**W. G. Shepherd**  
*Self-Love*

47pp. Anvil. £3.50.

0 85646 097 4  
**William Anderson**

*The Waking Dream: 30 Poems*  
 72pp. Hutchinson. £6.95 (paperback, £2.95).  
 009 131490 8

Hal Summers's poems are distinguished by their metrical smoothness and traditional sentiments, features which mean that his best pieces are personal, his worst meditatively general. The sharpest here is an elegy for a schoolmaster "Who ruled when we were young, / Rolling the heavy-ended Latin / Along his iron tongue." The exactness of "heavy-ended" promises more than the second stanza delivers, with its trite image of "the little farm

which may be strong enough to survive death. It is the theme of the Mesopotamian epic of Gilgamesh (2,000 ac) and of Aeneid's *Gododdin* (600 AD) - Turnbull alludes intelligently and sensitively to these poems, as he does to historical accounts of massacres on the Scottish borders or the work of the Sonderkommando in Auschwitz. The literary and historical material is intermingled with reportage from Turnbull's medical practice where the individual humiliations of "this one, that one, / their names embarked on history" are remembered with tenderness and precision. Some of the final images of the poem illustrate a persistent concern in Turnbull's writing:

and at midnight, cold and old,  
 in the absolute of their vastness, far,  
 the stars are strewn in the dark:  
 a precipitate of diamonds, mica seeds,  
 a mist of spicules, hoarfrost grains,  
 a dust of spicules, flaring glints,

of learning / He tilled day after day". So far so weak.

But there were certain flowers he passed  
 Which seemed for ever new:  
 Virgil, honour this ghost,  
 He honoured you.

The shortening of the last line hurts and makes us reread to discover that the poem's true subject is the mutual responsibility of past and present, teacher and pupil, subject and teacher. Out of a personal experience treated in general terms Summers makes a moral statement.

The danger of his method is sententiousness: "I was fortunate to be made / And am content to be broken" another poem ends, assertions which have not been earned or prepared for by what comes before, a description of names as belonging "To eternal individuals, not dying generations". The clumsy echo of Yeats suggests that the poet's ambition exceeds his grasp. Too often, Summers relies on the reader to supply the appropriate feelings. "Here lie my truths, alien and fugitive: / Breathe your truth into them and make them live." This injection from "Foreword" is alarming in its invitation to facile empathy, and too many poems have more professional accessibility than true intimacy.

Where Hal Summers's rhythms are slickly

## Darts Night

"I bet I shall end As always on double one"

I will record that double top, treble  
 nineteen and outer bull in my diary  
 when I get home. It is my highest score  
 of the night, and it means I am winning.

however temporarily. You line up  
 your arm with your eye and throw.  
 A treble to take back the lead.  
 Is there something wrong with my beer?  
 I wonder, watching its sluggish flow  
 down the canal tunnel of my glass.

The squeak of chalk. My toe  
 feels for the slat screwed to the floor,  
 and I confront the board  
 spinning backwards into its stationary blur  
 like a casually swung propeller  
 to the engine-roar of laughter from the bar.

Dangerous throwing a dart into that. I think,  
 and, sure enough, it sparks on metal  
 and spits back out at me.  
 I shift my weight. I seem to be in trouble.  
 Conscious of the sweat mingling with chalk dust  
 in my palm, I list my penultimate dart,  
 and, with all the inevitability of art,  
 leave myself MacNicol's infelicitous double.

SIMON RAE

a spume of shivered silver, diamantine  
 necks, an archipelago of quivered light

from an edge of iron  
 against a grindstone, thrust?  
 for a moment held  
 against the wheel of time.

Turnbull's Lindisfarne monk, asked to explain his mission to a Pict woman, "told her of the darkness amongst the barbarians, and of the great light among the monasteries at home". Gael Turnbull has sought out sources of light and exposed them to the attention of others. His art is a kind of intellectual midwifery whose concern is with bringing into the open ideas which have been forming in the darker recesses of the mind. The intense concentration and genial humanity which Turnbull brings to this operation ensure that *A Gathering of Poems* is both a very varied book and a continually interesting one.

accomplished, Alan Dixon's have an appealing lumpiness, and are fittingly illustrated by his rough woodcuts. The home-made feeling suits his subjects, almost exclusively domestic. "Cream crackers remind me of supper at uncle's"; this boldly un-Proustian sentence opens a poem which remembers a life devoted to imperfectly practised arts, and its properties, "classical biscuits from romantic tins". This might be a subject for condescension, but Dixon ends with an image of transcendence:

In later years there would be the TV  
 And later still the unnatural hues  
 Which nature surpassed before he went blind.  
 His final apples were beautiful shades of blue.

This inept Cézanne stumbles into beauty as Dixon's poems often seem to bump into significance.

"When October comes with the chill and the rain / And Mother has gone to the nuthouse again" Dixon finds that "I sink into self, the darkest of dives". What he finds there is not boggy introspection, though, for when

there's smell of wet biscuit and feel of wet feet.

To help with the chill and the grit and the rain  
 The Owl and the Pussy sat in the brain.

Dixon may come on as a sad heart in Coronation Street, but the "feel" is genuine and the fantasy both personal and banal. This poetically unusual but humanly commonplace mixture gives him, at his best, a gawky originality - though oftener than one would wish metrical padding and flat reportage blench his poems. What he offers is, as he says, "Inconvenient Coffee", "the old-fashioned kind / ground finely but roughly / in a mill which could be described / as awkward but decisive." That he lamentably caps this programme-note with "Easy solutions can be derivative" gives an exact measure of his talent and his limitations.

W. G. Shepherd's poems are heavily preoccupied with adolescent masturbation, and appear to exemplify the vices they describe by preening themselves on talking dirty. "To have it all gush out / Would be something. / But a little factitious crying / Was all that came - / Half-hard masturbation", the hero of one sequence broods. When at the end of the book Shepherd does let it all gush out the result is extraordinary. He instructs us that we depend on "giving and receiving love".

This is shown by the fact  
 That when isolation,  
 Psychological illness  
 Or some other disabling factor diminishes

Our opportunity or ability so to receive and give,  
 Life rapidly begins to appear  
 Insignificant. We find our value  
 In creative, intelligent love.

Self-love would seem to mutate into humour, less self-importance when it grows up, being incapable of redemption.

William Anderson too has, apparently, something important to tell us about creativity and man's place in the world. Children on a windy beach are "As trusting to the powers of force / As all the particles that whirl / With wind and earth and galaxy. / In air or in vacuity". One sees without feeling what he means. Directly immaterial, the poems keep describing what they ought to be doing, and resemble like postmodernist poems that don't do it.

# Incongruities of the actual

Lawrence Gowing

HOWARD HIBBARD

**Caravaggio**  
 404pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Thames and Hudson. £22.50.  
 0500901617

ALFRED MOIR

**Caravaggio**  
 168pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. New York: Abrams. £20.  
 0810907577

S. J. FREEDBERG

*Circa 1600: A Revolution of Style in Italian Painting*  
 114pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Harvard University Press. £21.50.  
 0 674 131568

In Caravaggio's time there was no doubt about him. He was a painter - "the outstanding painter in the city" - who was seen and known to disdain everything except the single, solitary act of painting from a model. For him art consisted in the eyeball-encounter in the shaft of light across a shadowed room. His art was an attack on art; the paradox was outrageous and lines of battle were drawn up accordingly. People were not in the least uncertain whether they were for him or against him.

His magnetic influence on young painters was one of the most provoking things about him. For three centuries, the Caravaggio legend told of a demon sent to destroy art. From Poussin to Berenson the note of resentment was almost constant. But the influence percolated through Europe regardless, and eventually reversed both the ideal of *disegno* and the hegemony of Italian style.

The clear-cut image was blurred, as much as anything by academic art history in the twentieth century. Legends attract criticism. But the method that habitually attacks them is shallow and vulnerable in other ways. The belief that originality is the product of stylistic determinants is certainly a habit if not actually a myth, and the scholarly supposition that Caravaggio was just a product of "cool" Mannerism in Lombardy, crossed with Counter-Reformation pietism in Rome, leaves the essential innovation untouched. When Wittkower put an early Caravaggio beside Annibale Carracci's "Man and Monkey" and demanded who was the truly revolutionary realist, he was no more to the point than Salvador had been when he protested against the Caravaggesque convention that beggar-boys were the indispensable subject for good painting. Caravaggio's revolution did not primarily concern his themes. When Friedlander connected the simplicity and authenticity of Caravaggio's religious pictures with the neo-Franciscan outlook of St Philip Neri and the Oratorians, the shattering impact was still unexplained. The expectation that Caravaggio must have been formed in the same way as other painters of his time remained irresistible. Now Howard Hibbard, with thirty-five years of modern research to draw on, brings to bear the kind of evidence that is relevant to the other painting of 1600. To excellent effect: the factual accounts in earlier studies are found to be to a large degree obsolete. Yet it is still possible to feel that the artistic character was in some ways clearer to Caravaggio's own time than it is in this book.

In the first pages, for example, we are told that the question "whether he was a conscious 'anti-Mannerist' is debatable". Yet if one thing was common knowledge, in the biographies, the law courts and the studios alike, it was surely that, amid not all Hibbard's sceptical probing will make it go away. Denis Mahon pointed out "an ironic view which can very well reflect... reactions to criticisms based on Cinquecento preoccupations". The dictum is quoted with approval, and the question of whether we are to call this reaction conscious or involuntary is merely verbal. It was a temperamental revulsion in which Bernini detected "a kind of fury".

From the beginning, the successes and the failings of Hibbard's approach are equally apparent. The historical characterization of the young outsider (trying to get in is highly convincing. Yet the conclusion that there is "no clear message" in a picture like the "Boy with Fruit" other than a vague wish to please leaves one suspecting that the sought-for message would be a detectable style-context - a schema that enabled us to evaluate the correction - or a story. The story that he detects in the early pictures based on the painter's reflection is a fascination with androgynous physique, and this perhaps leads him astray. He sees a quality of "solicitation" with a camp connotation that diminishes it. Yet the physical fascination was surely of a piece with the bodily grandeur and the sexual attractiveness of figures in later pictures like "The Martyrdom of St Matthew", which were, so far from ingratulating, full of existential bitterness. "Insecurities in the anatomy" are detected in the Bacchus, but Caravaggio's whole achievement rests on scorn for the kind of security sought by painters whose canons were conceptual and ideal. Caravaggio's realism is described as "almost tangible and portrait-like". It would be truer to say that the record of observation which he wrought extempore in paint was in essence intangible, and nearer to still-life than to portrait. Caravaggio was never, as Mancini recognized, good at likenesses, or at anything that required conceptual command, at least until his last pictures, when he had learnt the language of pure light and shade by heart, as inveterate life-painters eventually do.

The Bacchus is described as "cut off oddly at the top and right by the frame". It is a convention of cutting that one might call snapshotting, which specialized in the vivid way an unarranged subject met the frame. Annibale Carracci's "Beast Eater" was cut in just this way. Snapshotting, as Wittkower pointed out, was already a style and this must have been at least a permissive precedent for Caravaggio. The complication is that such precedents deserve and lack a careful study in themselves. With Caravaggio one would need to study the overtones they carried and the frame of mind in which they were used, at some rather unpredictable point in the gamut from respectful to furious. Hibbard cuts the debate about possible and impossible meanings short with the observation that "no-one would now be satisfied with the old idea of Caravaggio as a simple painter of the model"; he is more aware of art-historical fashion than of the simplicity with which Caravaggio cut exactly the knot that scholarship persists in retying.

Hibbard writes of the picture of the Magdalen as giving Bellori "opportunity for a set piece in which he conjured up a Caravaggio who painted pure genre from life", as if that were not a reasonable and verifiable account of how the picture was painted (given the vocabulary that calls everything without an iconographic label genre). To establish his own image of a conformist Caravaggio, quoting with freedom and fluency from the noblest religious painting of the sixteenth century, he needs to inculcate a certain disrespect for the sources. His description of Caravaggio's procedure in the Contarelli and Cerasi chapels in fact plays down just the peculiarities which were most conspicuous and remain most telling.

Empirical painting from life (unless it imitates the continuity of convention) is limited by how much can be accomplished before the model moves. If the head and shoulders of Saul's groom had aligned with his varicose legs the picture would have been quite different and no doubt more acceptable but it would not have been the manifesto that it undoubtedly is of eyeball confrontation in all its inconsistent vividness. If the shirt of St Paul's executioner had not rucked up under the weight of his cross, the "Martyrdom" would not have demonstrated the grotesque incongruities of the actual, in which its point surely lies (rather than in the distant echo of the Pauline Chapel, which is no more than sardonic). Hibbard discerns "a marvel of calculated art". Is that quite right for the rumpled shirt? In the Contarelli "Martyrdom" the incongruities endemic in the empirical method culminated in a seething cauldron of penitence and impromptu unparalleled until modern painting made repainting a way of life. I do not think that many will recognize the defiant Caravaggio whom they know in Hibbard's drawn, prudent creature, who "could disguise his limitations with darkness", and "masked his deficiency with chiaroscuro, which was aided by the chapel's gloom". Future camouflage was never Caravaggio's way.

The revolution of Caravaggio's early mastery produced masterpieces that were *sui generis*. Before classifying them as "history painting of a very serious kind", one should ponder Bellori's pronouncement that they were grossly inadequate as illustrations. Any other judgment would have been unfaithful to the standards of Caravaggio's sources and his successors. Does the Magdalen really mourn, or is she just drying her hair? Does Judith really saw through the gaping neck of Holofernes? Certainly she does not. She merely holds the sword with such resolution as a model can muster. Yet a virtue in the picture remains not only untouched, but even more eloquent of the fact that the girl's existential predicament, and thus her body and spirit, were real. Later Caravaggio was too experienced or too reckless to be caught in this dilemma. Action is not the realist's subject. The real violence is not the ostensible story; it is inherent in the realization itself. Even so, is Saul really thrown down beside the road to Damascus? Pace Mr Hibbard, he surely is not, nor was the drowsy horse over his mount. They were introduced severally into the studio and it was there, when the models were posed in the unfeeling light, that the revelation, the act whose force we feel for ever, truly began.

Later we come to know well a real narrative, the story of the realization of form. The form of a human body, for example. The shoulders and trunk face us squarely; the light passes laterally and obliquely across them. So far from being "belligerently sculptural", it is obstinately tonal. The ideal rhythms of High Renaissance style are forgotten. Modelling is for once worthy of the example of Masaccio: it is solid without being narcissistic. The head is turned sideways and downwards, turned in fury or tenderness, but turned with feeling, which makes tense the long stretched line of neck and shoulder. In love and fury; there were always both moods. The story of the body, the realization that means most in art, is told with a grandeur that is free from magniloquence.

Hibbard lists the agonized expressions that led up to "The Martyrdom of St Matthew" with the laconic observation that they seem to have derived from Titian's "Peter Martyr" and may reflect Dolce's observation that in the Titian "one seems to hear the scream". It is worth looking up the unpromising comparison because it is excellent evidence that at the critical points of his subject matter Caravaggio can only have used prototypes as a guide to posing the model. They cannot possibly have led him to his figurative realization (as Hibbard seems to think - but when a writer is so far from the craft of painting it is hard to know how he imagines it) because the information that he needed was too different. To suppose that he could have taken over an actual formulation from Titian or Michelangelo (or to suppose that any painter could have borrowed from both) reveals a strange imperviousness to the real problem of figuration and the force of Caravaggio's answer to it.

All art derives from art: no one can invent it. But comparison with the sources that Caravaggio re-enacted, as if to take them captive, as well as the impression on his contemporaries and his own scornful words, all confirm that for him art was as much a defiance of art. His dark and terrible mirror revealed the current artistic convention to be by contrast a despicable game of art, a bagatelle. He would have none of it, neither conventional decorum, nor invention, nor even design and drawing. Painting as if fighting for life, he cut at the elegant undergrowth that he sprang from, clearing a place free of art, a place where a man could stand. He is the first of a new kind of artist and a new way in which originality works. He is the first of those who must disown and be disowned to live.

That is the difficulty of writing about him. He is the point at which assessment breaks down: perhaps he intended the breakdown as he set about demolishing the criteria that tradition had evolved, and substituting something

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elementary, coarse and passionate. The man we discover in these pictures demanded that painting should be an unarguable and irresistible act. If the basis was mimetic, then the representation had to be irrefutable and absolute; perhaps it had to be in some sense appalling. The current apparatus, drawing and thus style itself were confessions that the act could not stand alone. They made the painter less of a man. The true man was the one who could quite simply "paint well and well imitate natural things". Only he, as Caravaggio said when he was hauled to court for slandering a rival obscenely, was a *valenuomo*, a real man.

To replace the accumulated apparatus of art with the single act of painting from life and to replace the ideal with a model, a girl who walked the Piazza Navona, were monstrous presumptions. They reflected the same pride and disdain that echo through the records of his life. The painting was marked with the defiance of the man who wore no clothing but the finest and wore it till the velvet dropped in rage.

Hibbard's view of Caravaggio as dependent on the sixteenth-century tradition of religious imagery either springs from or results in a serious conviction: "I am convinced that Caravaggio needed to believe in the Grace of God." I am far from unconvinced of this myself. It is indeed unlikely that a manic-depressive affliction of this appalling acuteness would have permitted such productivity without every support that the background offered. Van Mander's hearsay account is convincing. "After two weeks of work he will sally forth for two months at a time, with his rapier at his side, always ready to argue or fight . . .". We have already met this oscillation. We have known it from the beginning in the Bacchic near-self-portraits. Each euphoric personification was succeeded by its counterpart and opposite, in which the same face was abruptly darkened, sickened, abject or agonized and cruelly bitten, or horribly infuriated, poisoned and decapitated as Medusa. The alternation is at once comprehensible, almost sympathetic, yet eventually impenetrable, alienated and hostile, ultimately irreconcilable with life itself.

The sources describe Caravaggio looking for trouble in the company of the street boys whose motto was *ne spe, ne metu*. In the studio the attitude to art was the same. His intolerant pride conveyed a manic assurance that the world of style was wide open, ready to fall apart at a touch from the brush of the *valenuomo*. Its counterpart was the depth of depressive shadow in which nothing could stand but indisputable fact, the certainty of natural things. As in the fearful life of the man, cutting a path towards his desolate grave, so in the pictures, he was both the assailant and the inevitable victim; the last reflection of his own face in Goliath's severed head was bitterly appropriate.

Caravaggio is one of those painters half of whose meaning rests on the failings, indeed the pathology of his style. Hibbard quotes Mahon on his uniquely talented incompetence but he fails to allow for this in his criticism of actual pictures. Caravaggio was undoubtedly alert, and in a special, defiant way sensitive, to the illustrative connotations of optical chance. Yet the supposition that he managed them as a branch of conventional academic contrivance leads to the over-interpretation that current academic criticism is prone to. The National Gallery "Emmaus" may or may not prefigure the consecration of the Host more or less than such subjects necessarily do, but the account of Christ's gestures overlooks an illustrative impasse that is inherent in the realistic method. One hand is poised as if to represent the breaking of bread while the other mimes the giving, a combination that is ineffective by comparison with the gestures of the Apostles which (rather than mimicking Crucifixion) forcefully gesticulate that they knew Him. In the same picture, Hibbard is at a loss with the anachronism of Autumn fruits in an Easter story. The basket is surely on the edge not only of the table but of the circumstantial anecdote, sliding away into the zone of symbolic meaning in which the anecdote is set.

The religious affiliation, whatever it was, was certainly significant. The relevance of the dispute about Grace in the Jesuit order (which Hibbard invokes) to "The Calling of St Matthew" is far from clear, but Caravaggio certainly had the aid of a theologian and a Hebraist when he painted his first altarpiece of the Evangelist inspired to write a fabricated and emended Hebrew gospel. This first "St Matthew" looks singularly like Socrates—in keeping with the embarrassing simplicity which earned the picture its rejection. Alfred Moir, whose *Caravaggio* is a magnificent and indispensable volume of plates, illustrates a Roman bust to demonstrate the likeness. St Philip Neri was described as a Christian Socrates and one need not be intimidated by the list of authorities who discount "the idea that Caravaggio himself was somehow affected by Oratorian ideals".

Any possible link with the priesthood or the Oratory would have been worth tracing. It is well known that Caravaggio's brother was a priest, who looked him up at the Palace where a cardinal of camp aesthetic tastes was lodging him in the justified hope that he would turn out to be a winner. Caravaggio incurred much disapproval for trying to disown him, and the brother went sadly away. There the story, perhaps ends, except for the fact that one of the associates at the Chiesa Nuova who gave evidence at the process for St Philip's canonization in 1622 was nicknamed Rosato da Caravaggio. One would like to be sure that this rosy father's original name was not Giovanni Battista Merisi (the name of the rejected brother) before concluding that there is no clue

to associations with the Oratorian establishment that could have attracted and repelled the painter.

No one else's view of a favourite painter entirely satisfies one. But there are splendid things in Hibbard's book, perceptive and moving things, quite apart from close and illuminating reading of the biographical evidence. Here is a sample:

Both Matthew and Paul are essentially alone, abandoned in mortal crisis. The fear of being helplessly open to attack, like Matthew or Holofernes or Paul, seems to have aroused anxieties in Caravaggio that led him to invent increasingly novel pictorial treatments . . . The whole picture of Matthew's martyrdom seems to resolve itself in the contrast between the violence of the nude executioner and the delicate, curved palm from that is being carefully lowered into the martyr's hand. Carefully, because Caravaggio's angel has not yet learned to fly; he rests on his cloudy support as best he can and leans down hesitantly so as not to fall. This part of the painting is still the work of the "realist" Caravaggio who seems to say with Courbet, "Show me an angel and I will paint you one."

This is the one book on Caravaggio that no one will be able to do without. It is frequently questionable, but its very partiality is impressive—there is no doubt that the painter is deeply important to the writer. Nothing else in the

## In the decorative line

Roger Jones

ANDREW LADIS  
Taddeo Gaddi: Critical Reappraisal and Catalogue Raisonné  
276pp, with 8 colour and 62 black-and-white illustrations. University of Missouri Press.  
£52.50.  
08262 03825

Like the great decorator Giotto himself, his pupil and long-time associate Taddeo Gaddi (c1300-1366) is not an artist whose work will be familiar at first hand except to those who know Italy—in Taddeo Gaddi's case, particularly Florence—quite well. Even then, perhaps confused by the existence of artists called Gaddo Gaddi, and Agnolo and Giovanni Gaddi (Taddeo's father and his own two sons), not to mention his contemporary Bernardo Daddi, they may have given up the struggle to identify them and wandered in Santa Croce, like the Baedeker-less Lucy Honeychurch in *A Room With a View*, "disdainfully, unwilling to be enthusiastic over monuments of uncertain authorship and date".

But his paintings there may still have impressed themselves on the memory. Taddeo was certainly out to grab the beholder's attention. On either side of the entrance arch to the chapel he painted for the Baroncelli family, half-length figures of Judith and Jael display the severed heads of their victims, "illusionistically" holding them outside their fictive, window-like, quatrefoil frames. In a niche painted beside the altar, a life-size David does the same, treading the while on Goliath's back, thus adding impetus to the blood that still spurts from his neck—directly above the beholder's head. On the (now dispersed) panels Taddeo painted for the cupboards of the nearby sacristy two of the St Francis stories were rendered so vividly that the figures of the virgins were, it seems, half-scratched out by "children and other simple people" (as Vasari put it in 1550 when describing a similar expression of public taste directed at a work by Andrea del Castagno).

Andrew Ladis's *Taddeo Gaddi*, the first full-scale monograph on the artist, aims not only to provide specialists with a comprehensive account of the oeuvre but also to restore to Taddeo the reputation he once enjoyed. To this end, the reappraisal is written in a lively (indeed occasionally facetious) manner and dwells on some of the more sensational aspects of the time, the place and the circumstances. It is a little gratuitous to list the grisly symptoms of the Black Death, but on the other hand its presentation of Christiano Klapisch-Zuber's work on the *chiorini*, the noisy wedding ritual, does help to bring Taddeo's "Marriage of the Virgin" back to life.

The account of the paintings themselves will have been influenced by the discovery of Taddeo's many works, which is the basis of

literature is so continuously enjoyable as well as useful.

To do justice to the paintings one needs to keep the illustrations in Moir's album to hand. Why do printers insist on rotating the round shield of "Medusa" through something like 10 degrees anti-clockwise, thus weakening the horror?

S. J. Freedberg's lecture on Caravaggio is prolific in the kind of appreciation that now comes hardest to historians. Not for him the astringent restraint that is the present scholarly fashion. The pieces on Ludovico and Annibale Carracci are richer still. Freedberg is uncommonly yet invariably literate, and for pages together unremittingly literary, picking at epithets with Jamesian fastidiousness. The response is not only superlatively and consistently imaginative; it rises on occasion to a far-fetched magniloquence that is on the edge of the imaginary. One might guess that these lectures, which offer (in almost incidental flashes) history of illuminating brilliance, were also overwhelming performances. One imagines wave after wave of applause wrung from audiences as if by the flights of bel canto. Cognocenti will be aware that this is a book not to be missed.

plorations of space, light, colour and expressive narrative. But these have long been admired and the problem has been rather to avoid the impression, apparently first articulated by Taddeo himself, that painting declined after Giotto's death. The later dated works are hard to present attractively and there are also problems of chronology—no surviving works can be securely dated within the last eleven years of his life.

Ladis has a masterful approach to the problem, exhorting us to admire really very slight works, like the preparatory *sinopia* from San Miniato, and assigning, for example, the ground-breaking refectory mural in S Croce to c1360 with the *ex cathedra*, unargued, confidence of an old-fashioned connoisseur, despite the fact that others have placed it twenty years earlier. He has, however, come up with documents to show that Taddeo was at any rate still painting the year before he died, and if they apply, as he suggests, to the Santa Maria Nuova "Resurrection", they would demonstrate an artist of still impressive power.

The exhaustively compiled catalogue, with an appendix of documents, some of them new, will give the book a lasting value. It is impossible to discuss here the confident new attributions, but one may question the division of the catalogue into autograph and shop work, particularly since one or two paintings, like the moving "Entombment" at Yale feature prominently in the reappraisal, but are relegated without explanation to the shop category. Conversely, "Frescoes accompanied by *sinopie* are automatically included in the first group". This means that the Ognissanti "Crucifixion" would now have to be promoted, since it has recently been cleaned and its *sinopia* under-drawing revealed. This *sinopia*, incidentally, is of some interest as it not only shows the kind of choices made by the artist in the evolution of his design but may also help in comparative dating, since the pose of the right-hand cup-bearing angel in the *sinopia* repeats that of its beautiful counterpart at S Croce, while in the fresco it has been quite transformed.

The publication of documentary material almost inevitably provides easy opportunities for nit-picking—three of the inscriptions which can be readily checked in Florence are here presented with numerous minor errors of transcription; the interpretation of some of the documents, eg those for S. Miniato, might be challenged, and "proferio" (p 57) means not "effort", but "porphyry". Students with a less connoisseurish approach than Ladis may feel frustrated by his failure to take proper account of the views of others on certain questions of patronage and iconography. But it is uncharitable to grumble at omissions and it is worth drawing attention rather to Ladis's up-to-date use of evidence of punch marks on gilded shields and borders as a means of attribution—material that would have had more impact if backed up by more detailed illustrations.

## Culture's missionary

David Summers

KENNETH CLARK  
*The Art of Humanism*  
189pp, with black-and-white illustrations. John Murray. £12.50.  
07195 40771

Kenneth Clark's art history was written during a time of much greater faith in the idea of culture than exists at present. Lord Clark published books in art history regularly after *The Gothic Revival* (1928); his interest in the Italian Renaissance produced a number of books, the best known being his monograph on Leonardo da Vinci, first published just before the Second World War. After the war the scope of his historical concerns continually broadened—*Landscape into Art* (1949), *The Nude* (1956)—and this broadening culminated in the *Civilization* series, which united a synthetic view of Western art with his years of experience in television. In an important respect, this small collection of essays on the Italian Renaissance, spanning a period of some forty years, exemplifies his life's work.

To re-read *The Nude* today (and to read the essays in *The Art of Humanism*) is to realize how thoroughly Clark shaped the critical apprehension of the issues and the artists he treated. It is also to realize how much the history of art has changed. More recent art historical scholarship stands in a very different relationship to a cultured or potentially cultured audience from Clark's. Clark simply and obviously aspired to the writing of literature on his subject, and this evident aspiration at once distinguishes his enterprise from much more recent writing. His constant model for the essays in this volume is Walter Pater, a writer to whom he often refers and to whose judgments he often yields. But for all the similarities, there are important differences from Pater in Clark's writing. Although he takes up many of Pater's weapons, Clark's essays never have the aestheticist distance from the reader that Pater's have, and this is an important clue to Clark's own undertaking.

In his wonderful essay on the poetry of Michelangelo, Pater moves from art to poetry to biography and back again, pressing by degrees toward the characterization of a great artist. This characterization is the essay's guiding purpose, and events of biography are chosen when they are more revealing of the artist's character. Clark proceeds similarly. Depending on the case at hand, the ratio of art to poetry, or of poetry to biography, changes.

### On microfiche

The benefits of microform publishing to researchers and others are best realized when its vast storage potential is used to house material which is rare or inaccessible to all but a few. In the case of art history, in which pictorial colour microfiche is used, there are some obvious advantages. Chadwyck-Healey's *Russian Futurism 1910-1916*, for example, consists of seventy-seven colour and monochrome fiches—with up to ninety-eight reproductions on each—containing a large collection of rare material by Malevich, Mayakovsky and others. Further Chadwyck-Healey projects offer Historic Buildings in Britain, the Drawings of Robert and James Adam, English satirical prints in the British Museum and, as part of a programme begun in 1974 to reprint exhibition catalogues from all over the world, all the catalogues from V & A exhibitions between 1862 and 1974. Details are available from 20 Newmarket Road, Cambridge CB5 8DT.

Judging by the number of firms which publish them, catalogues are well suited to

microform. The roughly 15,000 sales catalogues which Sotheby's issued in the last two and a half centuries are available on microfilm; details of this collection, which gives names of sellers, buyers, dates and prices, can be had from University Microfilms International, 300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, Michigan 48106, USA.

Emmett Microform's Fine Art series has only two titles so far (though they intend to add one per year), one of which is the *Virtual Catalogue of Miniature Paintings in the Victoria and Albert Museum*, consisting of 2,500 pictures alphabetically arranged on microfiches which contain only sixty frames, presumably reproducing a crisp image. Because fine art has received a lot of attention from other publishers, Emmett have decided to emphasize their fashion, applied arts and design lists. Catalogues are available from 57a Lion Lane, Haslemere, Surrey GU27 1JF.

J. C.

standing. The comparisons to poetry, in fact, serve the purpose of clarifying what is said by relating art to what the reader is assumed to know well, the poetry of Dante and Milton, Shakespeare or Greek tragedy. To make such comparisons is of course to characterize art without saying more, and if it may also occasionally overcharacterize or mischaracterize, it places seeing and feeling in close proximity, and demands the reader's comparison of what is felt as it is seen to imaginary realms conjured by what is read or heard.

Between Pater and Clark there intervened the growth of modern connoisseurship, by which Clark's essays are also deeply informed. If they work to very different purposes, connoisseurship and criticism are not so far apart: both are at bottom concerned with the quality of works of art as characteristic of the artist who made them. The frequent judgments about the quality, success or failure of works of art that pepper these essays add a certain piquancy and concreteness, while their typical offhandedness invites the reader to similar personal consideration and judgment.

Clark writes close to literary sources, and seldom cites either documents or scholarship. He prefers Vasari to his correctors, the "legend" of Alberti to that of others. Although the essays in this volume are mostly adapted from lectures, this same pattern may be seen in his other writings as well. The essays have an interesting, conversational engagement with scholarship, but there is little overt display of learning, which is treated with *sprezzatura*, as if naturally. This also has the effect of including rather than excluding the reader. Clark's refusal to do more than what is simply helpful to the reader is again perfectly consistent with his overall aim, which was to make great art accessible and meaningful to an interested and educated audience, or, conversely, to educate, to make cultured, by means of interest in art. One might, after all, go off and read Milton, having seen his poetry compared to Mantegna.

Clark concerned himself with works that by consensus are great art, and his writing is still very much in the tradition stretching forward from Vasari. The reputations of great masters and masterpieces may rise and fall (Clark regrets that we have lost the words to praise Botticelli) but they do not fall absolutely, and the canon which emerges from a tradition of praise, with additions and adjustments in the relative standing of its members, survives changes in taste and styles of interpretation. And whether or not the canon of great works is acknowledged, it none the less exerts a strong influence on the criticism and history of art. As

contemporary or non-Western art is added to the canon, it is accompanied by the implicit demand that critical words, old or new, be found to praise it and to justify its standing. In the case of the history of art, it is probably true that it is not really possible to figure out how it works by trying to construct connections between great works chronologically arranged. At the same time, it should be recognized that when art history is about history and not about art—even if it is about the peculiar history that art has—it is necessarily academic, and for all its importance as an intellectual project, it simply by-passes the question and fascinations with art that most people have, and does not address the values they find in the experience of it. Perhaps for this reason art history becomes more and more exclusive as it becomes more and more "contextualized".

The canon also continues to exert a powerful force on the conduct of the history of art. Michelangelo's art undergoes constant critical and historical redefinition but the art of Baccio Bandinelli does not, even though such work would undoubtedly help us to understand the art history of the sixteenth century. Attempts to plot art historical change more "democratically", irrespective of the quality of the art involved, are also inevitably academic, and are usually of no more interest to a non-professional audience than any other academic studies. The canon thus dies hard. This is partly because it is a deep habit of thought, but also surely it is because some works of art are of more interest than others. Some in fact are of the level of interest of the poetry of Dante or Milton, and, as great human accomplishments, are of the highest and most general human interest. All of this suggests that it is necessary explicitly and continuously to address the canon itself and to say why and how great art is great art. It is no more certain that we wish to abandon such an enterprise than it is that we wish to abandon the general educational project of culture, or the role of the study of art in that project.

It is unlikely that any art history now being written will fail to be characteristic of its time. Clark's best known art history exemplified a very high faith in the worth and efficacy of culture and its dissemination, and in the history of art as a means to that end. We are now in a trough of reaction against such a faith, and our history will show this. But probably this will not always be so, and in the meantime it is likely that Kenneth Clark's essays about the personal experience of great art and the human values to be drawn from this experience will continue to be read in response to the interest we take in great art itself.

### Art Books from Yale

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## Noble and nude and antique

Graham Reynolds

CHRISTOPHER WOOD  
*Olympian Dreamers: Victorian Classical Painters 1860-1914*  
272pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Constable. £14.  
009-4621705

Victorian art was in the main a home-grown product. Landseer, Maclise, Frith, Rossetti, Egg, most of the painters whose names spring to mind, were students of the Academy Schools. Inbred traditions gave a stamp of insularity to British art. Foreign observers noticed the preponderance of small domestic scenes, the attention to minute detail, the avoidance of the violent or the heroic in our national painting.

Yet around the 1850s a number of individually-minded students, Leighton, Poynter and Armstrong among them, sought training on the Continent. Here they found that far more emphasis was laid on rapid drawing and sketching from the nude model. On their return to England, reinforced by the established painter G. F. Watts, by the Dutchman Alma-Tadema, and by others, they set about transforming historical painting. Their pictures of life or legend in Greece and Rome struck a responsive chord in a generation acutely aware of the fruits of a classical education. The coterie which grew round Leighton was not a formally organized group with a publicly proclaimed artistic credo; but its rejection of current preoccupations was second in importance only to the revolution achieved by the Pre-Raphaelites fifteen years earlier. This circle of Victorian classical painters is the subject of Christopher Wood's monograph *Olympian Dreamers*.

A student in Paris in the middle of the century would have seen much of the *neo-grec* painters such as Gérôme, Cabanel, Bouguereau. Leighton and his fellow sympathizers imported their ideas into England. The remote, idealized past which they chose to depict was well adapted to the portrayal of the human form to which their training had been so largely devoted. However they did not apply themselves exclusively to scenes of Greece and Rome. Alma-Tadema, a pupil of the Romantic painter Baron Leys, began his career with scenes from Merovingian history, such as the education of the children of Clovis. Leighton's earliest successes, the "Death of Brunelleschi" and the "Cimabue", for example, were set in medieval Italy. In the 1870s he was still poised between the two worlds; in his frescoes for the South Kensington Museum he set the "Arts of War" in the Middle Ages, and the "Arts of Peace" in ancient Greece.

Any aspect of the past was congenial to the Victorians, who felt a strong desire to place as

much distance as possible between themselves and the realities of the present. It was a form of escapism which outraged Charles Dickens and formed the basis of his bitter opposition to the Pre-Raphaelites. He wrote: "The false glitter of romance has gilded many a falsehood in the world; it has created none greater than that which ascribes more virtues to the past than to the present."

Ever since the rebirth of learning, each generation has evolved its own distinctive return to classicism. Christopher Wood comments that the paintings of Watts, Waterhouse and the like tell us more about the Victorian age than about antiquity. Earlier styles of neo-classicism were equally subject to the form and pressure of the time. Turner's Phryne goes to the public baths as one of a group of small doll-like figures dancing in tinted steam. Leighton's "Phryne at Eleusis" is a single statuesque figure, well rounded, sharply lit, and filling most of the picture space. Since most antique remains are sculptures, the attempt to emulate ancient art necessitates a sculptural approach to form. The ideal is expressed in Swinburne's description of Dolores: "noble and nude and antique"; but that aspiration was often overlaid by the more mundane aspects of late nineteenth-century society. Richard Muther's estimate of Albert Moore is applicable to most of the English Greek revival paintings: "It might be said that the old figures of Tanagra had received new life, were it not felt, at the same time, that these beings must have drunk a good deal of ten."

Artists who followed classical sculptors in representing the naked body raised complex issues for Victorian morality. The Bishop of Carlisle was deeply worried by Alma-Tadema's "The Sculptor's Model": "For a living artist to exhibit a life-size, life-like, almost photographic representation of a beautiful naked woman strikes my inartistic mind as somewhat if not very mischievous." Strangely, the same artist's "The Tepidarium", which is far more explicitly erotic, was regarded as a chaste picture. Its later history has been recorded by Edward Morris in his catalogue of the Lady Lever art collection. It was bought by A & F Peers as an advertisement for their soap, a fate to which Millais's "Bubbles" was subjected: then it dawned on the firm that it was unsuited for wide circulation.

Within the apparent uniformity of theme there is considerable diversity of approach, intention and technique among the Victorian classicists. Leighton enjoyed the most eclectic training of all, in Frankfurt, Rome and Paris. His was an achievement of the will rather than of innate facility. He was uniquely endowed for the appropriately Olympian position of President of the Royal Academy, and utterly admirable for his sense of duty and his generosity to other artists. Yet Watts identified the weakness in such superficially impeccable composi-

tions as "The Syracusan Bride" when he said that there should be more of the accidental in his work.

Watts himself was almost a living Old Master when he was caught up in this neo-classic revival. Although his seminal years were spent in Florence, his painterly affiliations were with the Venetians. Potentially the most gifted of these artists in his sense of form and freedom of brushwork, his talent was blunted by his lack of energy and sapped by the adulation of adoring, possessive women. His ambitious cycle of paintings on the theme of the "House of Life" fails to hold the attention because his intellectual grasp of the philosophical issues did not match his powers of execution.

Poynter still awaits a biography on the scale accorded to Leighton by Léonée and Richard Ormond, and to Eastlake by David Robertson. He was a *fin de siècle* Eastlake, to the extent even of doubling the roles of President of the Royal Academy and Director to the National Gallery. He exerted a beneficial influence on British art training by introducing French methods and teachers. His official activities unfairly distract attention from his gifts as a painter. He had a far more acute sense of female beauty, of the physical attraction of nymphets, and a greater facility for graceful composition than Leighton or Watts. Albert Moore, even more of a recluse than Poynter, possessed an outstanding sensibility for colour. His static, lotus-eating world of weary maidens linked in harmonious compositions bridges the classical and the aesthetic movements of the time.

The inclusion of Burne-Jones in this study is justified by the handful of paintings he made on classical themes. The Greece he painted in his Perseus cycle is, in its bleakness, aridity and cruelty, closer to the reality than Alma-Tadema's cosy domesticities. Yet Alma-Tadema

## From public to private

William Vaughan

ROBERT ROSENBLUM and H.W. JANSON  
*Art of the Nineteenth Century: Painting and Sculpture*  
527pp, with colour and black-and-white illustrations. Thames and Hudson. £25.  
0500-233853

"If ever a history of art should be thought of as a work in progress, it is this one." Robert Rosenblum's remark in his preface to this survey is in fact necessary. For the rapid changes of the late twentieth century are affecting aesthetic preferences as much as any other set of values we possess. It might seem that in such circumstances general surveys - with their implication of collation and synthesis - should be avoided, but they have never been more crucial.

A reassessment of nineteenth-century painting and sculpture is long overdue. The authors of the present work are eminently suited for the task: both are distinguished for their breadth of thought and scholarship, as well as for important contributions to the study of nineteenth-century art. Sadly, H.W. Janson died before *Art of the Nineteenth Century: Painting and Sculpture* was through the press. His sections of the book (admirably edited by Jane Hargrove) provide a distillation of his important recent researches into nineteenth-century sculpture. It is also good to learn that a full version of his text will be published as a separate book in due course.

In writing their sections of the book, both scholars have kept strictly to their own pitches. There have, however, been some common ground rules that they have followed. One has been - in line with current trends - to make social and political divisions predominate over aesthetic ones. Thus, instead of such topics as "Neo-classicism", "Romanticism", or "Realism", we are given periods bounded by the American Declaration of Independence of 1776 (a reminder of the authors' nationality), the 1815 Congress of Vienna, the "Year of Revolutions" (1848), and the Franco-Prussian War (1870). As the authors acknowledge, such divisions of time have value in the sense that they contain within them the main new historical

had an individual sense of panoramic space which made him an influential figure in the late nineteenth-century reform of theatrical décor.

Christopher Wood has given himself sufficient scope to explore the byways of his subject. He gives extensive coverage to J. W. Waterhouse, who clad mythology in Nordic detail, a style also adopted by Simeon Solomon, Strudwick and Spencer Stanhope. A more academic approach was taken by Hacker and Draper, and Godward carried marble painting into the unresponsive atmosphere of the 1920s.

In their day most of these artists were rewarded with wealth, fame and international honours. The awe in which they were held is typified by the behaviour of the Russell Barringtons. Mrs Russell Barrington was a relentless hunter of artistic lions. Described by a rival as "that poisonous snake" she moved next door to Watts in Melbury Road. Her husband, a sympathetic figure in comparison, had to be left outside when she visited studios since he "never knew what to say to artists about their own work". It is hardly surprising that the reputation of artists elevated to such intimidating pinnacles should have plummeted after their Greco-Roman retreat had been invaded by followers of the Impressionists, the Cubists, and even more subversive imports from abroad. For a while their images lingered on as models for films and illustrations to children's encyclopedias. But few artistic exiles are permanent and recent years have seen a spectacular return of interest in their work. Christopher Wood has provided a well-balanced mixture of biography, anecdote and criticism about his Olympians. By giving an ample array of reproductions of their works he has made it possible to savour the distinctive quality they brought to late nineteenth-century British painting, and to see that they merit the current reappraisal of their contribution.

of emphasizing the public face of art. On the whole sculpture fares better than painting under this system, since it remained throughout the nineteenth century an art which was heavily dependent upon official patronage. Painting (being by its nature more adaptable) was able to move more emphatically from the public world of the history painter to the private domain of the Impressionists and Symbolists.

It is this shift that provides a central problem for any historical survey of nineteenth-century art. It is hardly satisfactory to measure the art of the period by the prevalent standards of the time: it would lead to the eradication of such figures as Blake, Van Gogh and Cézanne since their public impact in their lifetimes was negligible. On the other hand it is no better to adopt a "modernist" interpretation of nineteenth-century art, as this casts a few individuals in the role of precursors of the twentieth century and ignores the context in which they worked. Like most recent commentators, Rosenblum opts for a compromise: he divides his discussion between the consideration of "great individuals", and the linking of the works of these and lesser practitioners around historical themes. This strategy can lead to strange bedfellows - as in the chapter subtitled "The Congress of Vienna and Late Goya". However, it does allow him to keep in play a rich variety of interests, and to communicate the tension between public and private values which was a very real part of the life of the time. It also gives him the opportunity to demonstrate a consummate skill in developing arguments through the comparative analysis of works of art.

The challenge of the book's approach is matched by its fine illustrations, which mingle the familiar with the unfamiliar in an intriguing and instructive manner. Particularly welcome is the inclusion of so many American and Eastern European examples. These should be an eye-opener for many art historians. Above all this is an exploratory book, an agent for change. As Professor Rosenblum suggests, many of its views may prove transitory. Yet it will undoubtedly have an impact and enhance the quality of the developments that will take place around it.

## A choreography of society

Robert L. Herbert

PETER DE FRANCIA  
*Fernand Léger*  
280pp, with 63 colour plates and black-and-white illustrations. Yale University Press. £25.  
0300-030673

Peter de Francia is professor of painting at the Royal College of Art, and the chief virtue of his substantial and well-illustrated book is found in his close readings of the ways Léger's drawings and paintings actually appear, readings that are happily free of the usual critical jargon. In distinguishing Léger's drawings of 1912-13 from Picasso's and Braque's, which he correctly sees as dependent upon major intersections of line and tone, Professor de Francia writes that in Léger

the nodal points are obliterated by the pressure of the masses with the result that the entire structure of the drawing appears to press outwards, obliterating the edge of the paper. Intersections, because they are rendered neutrally, tend to give the lines forming them the role of a scaffolding, the elements of which terminate outside the limits of the paper's edge. The forms are, as it were, slung from one to the other. What is essentially suggested is the vitality of the scaffolding itself.

When he turns to Léger's classicizing drawings of the 1920s, he is equally perceptive:

Their mechanical structure is deliberately counteracted by non-mechanical handling. Thus the apparent severity of language is permeated with a remarkable tenderness. Conceptual forcefulness is counteracted by a certain measure of tentativeness, a degree of innate reluctance to use language with clinical detachment.

Léger needs such a sensitive treatment, for although he is uniformly regarded as one of the giants of twentieth-century art, his work is seldom really liked. Many people would as soon place an automobile tyre on their wall as a Léger. His art is marvellously decorative, but also curiously realistic, despite its obvious lack of verisimilitude. It therefore insists rather loudly on its presence. Here, too, de Francia is right on the mark:

A car, a hat, or a dog in a Léger are immediately identifiable for what they are, yet are obviously at the same time analogues of those objects. The hub of a wheel in his paintings is like the pupil of an eye in one of his figures. It is there because that is where one expects it to be. If isolated, it only remotely resembles that which it depicts. Léger's artefacts are prototypes of categories of objects. But since, visually, prototypes date as much as the series of objects that they engender, he invented his own.

Fernand Léger is well seasoned with interesting remarks and deductions. De Francia sees, in passing, that Cubism was fundamentally different from Cézanne (*pace* the fashionable opinion, held by William Rubin and others, that the two are virtually the same); he understands that Léger's wartime painting "La Partie de cartes" of 1917 was not a mere assemblage of forms, but the embodiment of "traumatic shock"; he rightly emphasizes Blaise Cendrars's closeness to the painter; he shows that Léger's continual plunges into contemporary life distinguish him from the more artful and confessional Picasso; he points to Léger's extensive activities outside painting, and gives separate chapters to his film-making and to his designs for theatre and dance.

The first three and the fifth chapters of this book take Léger's career from its beginnings to the late 1920s. The fourth chapter treats the cinema; others deal with Léger in the United States, his drawings, and the theatre. Each of these carries Léger through relevant aspects of his career from beginning to end; the chapter on drawing is distinctly the finest. The book concludes with two chapters on the late works, one on the series of "Constructeurs" begun in 1930 and the politics of realism, the other on the large paintings of leisure, including "La Grande parade", and to public decorations which he was only able to initiate in any important way after the Second World War: the mosaics at Assy and Bastogne, the stained glass at Audincourt and Courfaivre, the mosaic-ceramic mural and the large ceramics at Biot. (Biot is the site of the Musée Léger, and most of the work there was carried out after the artist's death in 1955. De Francia makes no mention of the very naive manager of the museum and the artist's estate by his widow Nadia, who died in 1982, and

Georges Bauquier, both former pupils of Léger.)

It is to Léger's later work that de Francia especially draws our attention. He faults previous writers for concentrating on the work before 1927-8, which he believes too "predictable" and too concerned with "pictorial values". The second half of Léger's career is deemed grander, in both its variety and its insistence upon communicating with the society from which it took its force. "Léger's art is a choreography of society, and stems from an empathy with the collective structures which he believed inseparable from it." The author's deep sympathy with Léger's social aspirations - he knew the artist in his later years - gives conviction to his analysis of the last paintings. He rightly sees Léger's post-war adherence to the Communist Party as neither a peripheral action nor a commitment to party politics, but, instead, as a logical consequence of his concern for realism in art, and of his long-standing sympathy with the left, for its championing of social issues. For de Francia, Léger stands out as



Léger's "Composition à la danseuse" will be offered for sale at Sotheby's on March 28.

the advocate of a human, therefore a socially oriented art, a beacon of pictorial and social order amidst the welter of art produced since 1950, which he regards as narrowly centred on issues of making art, and as being adrift in the troubled waters of subjectivity.

Despite his responsiveness to Léger's social ideals, de Francia concentrates largely on matters of style when he turns to paintings themselves. Subject-matter, said to be intertwined with style, is in fact substantially ignored. No account is taken of Léger's veritable programme for modern life in his pictures of the early 1920s: domestic interiors (women and children); urban entertainment (the circus); men in the factory and in city streets; the utopian city (*paysages animés*); the city supplied by modern transport (*les remorqueurs*), and so forth. The austere still-lives of the middle 1920s are not examined for their recurrent subjects, one of which is an easy mark, the slater arts: painting (easel, stretcher), music (guitar, accordion), literature (book), sculpture (vase, baluster), architecture (compass, doorway, wall), cinema and photography (film strip, photo).

In the pictures de Francia discusses are myriad elements that call out for analysis: the cattle and men in the *paysages animés* (Léger's father was a cattle dealer), the cartouche of dancing figures in "Les Feuilles vertes" of 1927, the quasi-abstract Adam and Eve, accompanied by the serpent, in "Composition à la fleur" of 1937, or the Americanization of Manet's "Déjeuner" in "La Partie de campagne" of 1943-54. Léger's work is full of unexplored touches: the flagrant placing of a Venus fly-trap at the crucial spot of a woman's anatomy (plates 33, 35), or the humour of confining David's "Mme Récamier" and "Marat" in "Hommage à Louis David" of 1948-9.

More broadly, Léger's subjects and the ideas readily found in his copious writings could have been more integrated with the style analysis. This would have required an examination of the early 1920s, where the origins of subsequent preoccupations lie: his preference for the artisan and draughtsman over the "elitist" artist (and over the industrial engineer), his longings for decorations on a public scale, his wish to associate his painting with architecture, sculpture, music, dance, theatre, literature and

cinema, his deliberate seeking out of contacts with artists in Germany and Russia (surely deserving a chapter equivalent to the one on the United States). Without an adequate consideration of the earlier ideas and work, this book cannot stand as a well-rounded monograph, and to review Léger's whole career, the reader will need to combine it with Christopher Green's *Léger and the Avant-Garde* (1976), devoted to the period before 1927. Even so, he will lack a well-integrated history, for both authors are principally interested in style, artificially separated from subject and therefore from meaning.

We are told that Léger was devoted to themes of leisure, but not told why or to what end. Léger's machine aesthetic is not really examined. For the most part one cannot identify any "machine" parts, and the few which can be found are not interpreted by the author. The issue should have been merged with an analysis of geometric organization since geometry and artistic attitudes towards it were the links with industrial technology. The artist's frequent statements that war and conflict were his preferred state of things should have been discussed. His conception of life as a clash of forces in which the strong win out is that of a liberal who accepts the underlying premises of capitalist competition but who wants to see it managed more humanely. That he was a liberal, not a radical, that he was an individualist more than a collectivist, should have been pointed out more clearly. Léger's credo, with which de Francia ends his book, speaks of creativity in terms of risk, freedom, combat with conventions, isolation from the ordinary, and individual genius, surely a list that puts him in the main current of modern artists, who help constitute a society which thrives on its critics. Léger concludes his credo, honestly, by stating that "people will see later on that this new art is not as revolutionary as they first thought, that it is linked to ancient traditions, the very ones he had to fight, those from which he had to wrest himself free in his solitary struggle".

Unfortunately de Francia is neither careful nor scholarly. A lack in the latter respect may be a virtue; in the former, certainly not. The bibliography is perfunctory in the extreme and in his text the author makes no use of exhibition catalogues nor of other publications since 1978 (and very little use of anything since 1972). The Léger exhibition in Cologne in 1978 dealt with issues he discusses, and the smaller Minneapolis exhibition of 1980 published Léger's letters to Alfred Barr which shed much light on "Le Grand déjeuner", "La Ville" and "Les Trois musiciens", all of which feature in *Fernand Léger*. There is no list of illustrations, so the reader cannot readily sort out faulty reprints, such as (p 246) to fig 10.19, instead of to pl 39 which, in turn, seems to be wrongly placed at Biot. Equally disconcerting are such inventions as "Cor van Easteren" (Cornelis van Esteren), "Duchamps Villon" (Raymond Duchamp-Villon), and "the Villon brothers" (the Duchamp brothers). These are not typographical errors, for they are so indexed ("Villon, Duchamps").

There is not a clear use of historical example in this book. It has an almost encyclopedic collection of references to artists and writers, but those are too often crammed together like a student's paste-up. Léger is said to have "predilections for certain painters: Orcagna, Carpaccio, Bellini, David, Beckmann and Orozco", yet none is discussed at that point in the text, and only David and Carpaccio are given significant mention elsewhere. Stravinsky, Brecht, Hegel, Valéry, Proust and Jackson Pollock share the cramped quarters of two successive paragraphs, and six lines have to play host to Thoreau, Twain, Charles Ives, and Samuel Barber. At such moments the reader wishes the author would discard this robe of erudition and set to work painting his observations directly in words, something he does so very well when he wishes to. He makes the reader cope also with a heady array of visual analogies: Georgia of Epinal, Georges de la Tour, playing-cards, Pontormo, Nuño González, Rembrandt, Dürer, Klee, Planellato, Schongauer, Van Eyck, Kalcharam Gosh, Pouquet... to name only the unconvincing ones.

(A book that would treat of Léger's rela-

tionships with other artists should exchange such a list for another, namely one containing those whose work had clear relevance to him: Greek sculptors, Giotto, several Quattrocento painters, David, Ingres, Corot, Cézanne, Seurat, Maillol. Of these only David is given prominence. To situate Léger in the twentieth century, we need much more about his life-long rival Picasso, about de Chirico, whose vacuumed architecture appealed to Léger in the 1920s, about Brancusi, Miró and Arp, whose bulbous forms are found in his paintings of the next decade, or about Dubuffet and Lichtenstein who learned so much from him after 1950.

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## JACOPO BELLINI

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text by Bernhard Degenhart and Annelise Schmitt

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Approximately 192 pages, 116 color illustrations, 25.4 cm x 37 cm. Publication date: Fall 1984

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# Scenes of tavern-life

Richard E. Spear

MARIANNA HARASZTI-TAKÁCS  
Spanish Genre Painting in the Seventeenth Century  
283pp. Budapest: Akadémiai Kiadó. £24.80.  
9 6305 28185

The title of this book will suggest to most readers paintings of unsophisticated revellers and urdins, and that is proper historically, inasmuch as Velázquez was the greatest early explorer in the field and Murillo its most influential, popular settler. But however much one may equate the rustic naturalism, earthen palette, and unsatirical depiction of mundane activities – as in Velázquez's "Old Woman Cooking Eggs", "Kitchen Scene with Christ in the House of Martha and Mary", "Two Men at a Table" and "The Waterseller" – with that elusive yet persistent presence of a distinctive Spanishness, their actual artistic and cultural origins are less clear.

Marianna Haraszi-Takács has sought to trace the sixteenth-century antecedents of Spanish genre painting, to follow its development to the end of the seventeenth century, and to catalogue nearly all known examples, including every relevant picture by, or after, Velázquez and Murillo. Thus, 111 of her 264 catalogue entries, which, in addition to addressing specialized problems, provide information on provenance, exhibition history and bibliography, fall under the headings of those two artists. The result is the richest survey of an important, if perplexing, phase in the development of European painting, and therefore is sure to serve as a major stimulus and reference tool for research and reflection on various connected problems.

The most significant of these issues concerns the conceptual and stylistic origins of *bodegones*. The term *bodegón* is first recorded in 1599 and is derived from the Greek *apothēkē*, a storage-place, by way of the Spanish *bodega*, a

humble tavern. In painting, the term refers to a genre picture that typically places large figures against still-life objects related to eating, drinking and cooking. Pure still lifes, therefore, which sometimes were called *bodegoncillos*, are not *bodegones*, nor are genre pictures in the Italian-Dutch manner of the "Bamboccianti", wherein smaller figures in quasi-narrative activities are placed further back in more expansive settings. Haraszi-Takács affirms that the *bodegón* emerged around 1600 in Seville, whose economic base and resultant patron class supported modest, readily marketable popular images that would have found little welcome in the more closed circles of the royalty at court. Seville's leading role in commerce (it was one of the world's largest cities at the time), particularly as a trade centre linked to both northern Italy and Flanders, was of great consequence for the history of Spanish painting, since it explains the presence in Andalusia of art from those distant areas.

Haraszi-Takács makes the intriguing suggestion that "it may be that certain genre pieces showing unsumming tables of cheap hostilities were originally intended for signboards", but the available evidence cannot, unfortunately, substantiate the proposal. Furthermore, it is very hard to support the author's notion that "Old Woman Cooking Eggs", "The Waterseller", and "Two Men at a Table" – let alone, by analogy, Annibale Carracci's large "Butcher's Shop" at Christ Church – "could have been used as signboards on a lime-washed wall above the door of a shabby roadside inn to induce people to enter", since their physical condition shows no evidence of exposure to the elements.

It has long been recognized that thematic as well as stylistic components of Velázquez's *bodegones* can be traced to models from the Low Countries (Aertsen, Beuckelaer), to greater Lombardy (Campi, Passerotti, Annibale Carracci), and to Venice (Bassano, above all), as the author demonstrates in her very useful account of "realistic genre painting" in

those regions. In regard to two further claims she is less convincing: that Caravaggio was "the pioneer whose genre pieces and genre-like ecclesiastic compositions – bearing all the marks of profaneness – most profoundly influenced Spanish genre painting on its way towards realism", and that "Velázquez's Italian journey is an explanation for the strongly Spanish character of Ribera's known genre paintings". It must be said that the unpolished translation of her Hungarian text often obscures and confounds her arguments.

Whether one tests these conclusions methodologically or only by way of the visual evidence, they are extremely problematic. Haraszi-Takács declines to demonstrate which Caravaggesque works might have been known in Seville by the late 1610s, and instead assumes that Velázquez was definitely familiar with, and imitated, Caravaggio's style. But she does not isolate which aspects of the *bodegones* she believes must have been influenced by Caravaggesque genre painting as distinct from Flemish, Lombard-Venetian or Spanish models. (In my view, it is hard to make a case that Velázquez's *bodegones* are Caravaggesque in composition, brushwork, colours or subject.) Generalizations are especially hazardous when so little is known about the impact of late sixteenth-century artists such as Juan de Labradador, who was praised by the later biographer Palomino for having painted "several *bodegoncillos* with various eatables, vessels and other accessories showing unusual mastery". One can only speculate on what influence Juan Estebán or Alonso Vázquez might have exerted on the rise of Spanish genre painting, and what roles Blas de Prado and Blas de Ledesma really played (tradition relates that Sánchez Cotán was Prado's apprentice).

Given the complexity of the problem, it cannot be readily assumed that early Baroque painting in Seville was deeply indebted to Caravaggio's style, let alone, as Haraszi-Takács claims, that Caravaggio was the seminal catalyst, and not just an incidental encouragement. Unfortunately, we are brought no closer to understanding the historical connections because some of the author's basic assumptions rest on unsubstantiated or inaccurate information. For example, she elaborates on the earlier hypothesis that one Camillo Contreras, as former prior of the Ospedale della Consolazione in Rome, may have taken paintings by Caravaggio to Seville, evidently unaware of more recent research which casts doubt on that proposal (Contreras's position at the Hospital is less than clear, and he is cited as deceased by 1601). Other seemingly minor slips ("according to recent research, in 1589 [Caravaggio] arrived in Rome", whereas Caravaggio is documented in Lombardy every year from 1589 to 1592) reveal unfamiliarity with the literature, or more likely a broader disregard for dealing carefully with chronology, which is clearest in the chronologically impossible proposal that Juan de Labradador "certainly selected his models from among the works of the Caravaggesque masters of the late Cinquecento."

Since throughout the book Haraszi-Takács moves back and forth from portraiture (which she maintains, "most certainly" was "the predecessor of genre painting in Seville") to allegories (Valdés Leal's macabre "Hieroglyphs" are included in the study as pseudo-genres) to genre subjects proper, it is hard to see why Ribera's "Five Senses" – painted c.1615-16, that is, earlier than any of Velázquez's *bodegones* – does not preclude her claiming that Ribera was dependent on Velázquez for his few genre inventions. Surely, the influence must have flowed in the opposite direction, as the Riberaesque "Toppers" by Velázquez makes clear. (Partly because of the poor translation, I was unable to follow her unlikely argument that Velázquez started the "Toppers" in Seville and finished it many years before it was paid for, in 1629.)

Recently Ellis Waterhouse has re-emphasized Ribera's connections with Bologna painting, many of whose sources in Venice and Lombardy were so important for Spanish art, too. That Haraszi-Takács equates Annibale Carracci's "Beast Eater" with Caravaggio's genre pictures and confuses caricature with genre art reveals a misapprehension of the attitudes of each artist and the nature of their work.

see that in profound ways Caravaggio's rare genre pictures were too artificial in conception and execution to have generated Spanish *bodegones*. If instead one were to place side by side still lifes by Sánchez Cotán and the late sixteenth-century Milanese artist Ambrogio Figino, one would recognize that Velázquez and Caravaggio often drank deeply from similar sources, and that the crucial links were not specifically between Velázquez and Caravaggio, or narrowly between Seville and Rome, but more broadly between Spain and Lombardy, which had been under Spanish dominion since 1535.

The remaining, briefer portion of the book traces later developments of genre painting in seventeenth-century Spain, but its construction is only as firm as its foundation. The *bodegones* by Alejandro de Loarte, for example, are discussed in the light of an entirely hypothetical link with Velázquez's shop in Seville and, in turn, with a group of very problematic attributions, while more relevant works by Sánchez Cotán, Pedro Orrente, and Luis Tristán – that is, from a Toledan-Castilian rather than Andalusian context – are slighted. Our understanding of artists such as Herrera the Elder and Esteban March is not advanced either, partly because stylistic alliances are weakly defined, partly because many attributions remain unsure, and partly because other issues are passed over.

If, for instance, the artistic and economic conditions mentioned above can help us understand the rise of *bodegones* in Seville, why then was Velázquez's legacy there minimal in relation to Ribera's, which, Haraszi-Takács says, barely managed to preserve the realist tradition of genre painting in Spain? The "conservative artistic life of the town, still fascinated by the Italian examples" is not a sufficient reason. (The book contains several old-fashioned equations of naturalism with quality and progress on the one hand, and of "anaemic", mannerism, "rigid" classicism, and "superficial" baroque with decadence or conservatism on the other.) In part, the problem is due to the lack of a sufficiently nice distinction between style and content, which is most apparent in the way portraiture and allegories are discussed in this study, and in the slight consideration given to the notion of hierarchies in art – to paint or purchase a pure genre picture was to question, in effect, the ancient, and Renaissance, conception of art as not dissoluble from moral instruction. Did Murillo find a market in Seville for his numerous depictions of urchins, or were they made mostly for foreigners? If the latter, did the dire economic and social decline of later seventeenth-century Seville contribute to altering attitudes towards genre art?

Haraszi-Takács is prudent in rejecting specific links between any known *bodegones* and incidents in Spanish picaresque literature, even though she believes that, because there was "something in common" in Velázquez's and Cervantes's "outlook to the world, [they] were led to similar artistic discoveries". It might be worth investigating, by analogy, the naturalistic literature of sixteenth-century northern Italy and the emergence of genre scenes there, though in both contexts it would be imperative to discriminate between the writer's bias for burlesque and the painter's respectfulness towards the peasantry, since the latter attitude, as Haraszi-Takács recognizes, is one of the most arresting qualities of seventeenth-century Spanish genre painting.

*Manet 1832-1883* (548pp. Thames and Hudson. £40. 0 500 97313), is the English language edition of the catalogue to the Manet retrospective, held last year in Paris and New York, now available in Britain. The exhibition, reviewed in the TLS May 20, 1983, celebrated the centenary of Manet's death with a massive selection of paintings, drawings and prints, all of them sumptuously illustrated in this book. The catalogue itself, by Françoise Cachin, Charles S. Moffett and Juliet Wilson Boreau, comprises 221 scholarly entries and spans some 450 pages. Other contributions include an introduction by Cachin, "Manet and Impressionism" by Moffett and "Manet and the print" by Michel Maffei. Two appendices contain Manet's letters to Zola and documents relating to his last illness and death.

# Paperbacks

## Architecture

OLIVE COOK. *The English Country House: An Art and a Way of Life*. Photographs by A. F. Kersting. 240pp. Thames and Hudson. £4.95. 0 500 27309 X. First published in 1974, this is an exemplary book in the proliferating country house genre; interesting, informative and lively. Olive Cook uses specific examples of existing country houses to illustrate their development from the medieval manor house to Lutwens and Richard Norman Shaw. The book is also a history of the birth and growth of architecture, an exclusively amateur practice – Vanbrugh, for example, who designed Castle Howard, had been a soldier and a playwright before he turned his hand to architecture – until, with the establishment of the Institute of British Architects in 1834 and its issue of a diploma from 1855, the architect became perforce a professional, divorced from the craftsman, and his function further curtailed by the advent of the engineer. *The English Country House* also illustrates the changing organization of social life, which was at its most complex in the great Victorian country houses where every task or diversion had its own allotted room. Vast numbers of domestic servants were employed but the division between master and servant was more rigid than ever before – to the extent, in the case of the 5th Duke of Portland, that "a servant caught with a broom at the wrong time of day in the master's quarters was instantly dismissed". A rare virtue of this book is that the photographs nearly always appear on the same page as the discussions of individual houses, making reference painless.

## Biography and memoirs

RONALD CLARK. *J.B.S.: The Life and Work of J. B. S. Haldane*. 286pp. Oxford University Press. £3.95. 0 19 281430 3. J. B. S. Haldane died nearly twenty years ago. He was a brilliant geneticist, physiologist and biochemist; buffoon, pyromaniac, classicist, communist, expert on gassing and ARP; perpetually unorthodox teacher and popularizer (he deliberately gassed the entire audience in the Church Hall at Aughterside by vaporizing a spoonful of Cayenne pepper). All these aspects are brought out in Clark's excellent biography (first published in 1968 by Hodder and Stoughton and reviewed in the TLS of November 7 that year). Among recent scientists there could hardly be a better subject: genetics and evolution, his two main concerns, are broadly accessible to the layman, and J.B.S. himself was above all a "character". His eccentricity and hatred of authority made his career quite unpredictable. As a scientist he will be mainly remembered for his proposal, with Oparin, of the "hot, dilute soup" theory of the origin of life and his linking of Darwin and Mendel in the Mathematical Theory of Genetics. Thereafter, amid continuing research, came increasing involvement with the Communist Party, much beautifully written journalism and many daft statements. Clark is very indulgent over Haldane's defence of Lysenko and Stalin and he makes little attempt to place his later contributions to biology in a wider context. But the man, ever alert, often exasperating, comes across vividly. There is a short new introduction by Sir Peter Medawar.

## Cinema

CHRISTIAN METZ. *Psychoanalysis and Cinema: The Imaginary Signifier*. 327pp. Macmillan. £7.95. 0 333 36640 9. Only half of this selection of Metz's theoretical work on cinema from 1973-76, originally published as *Le Signifiant*

*Imaginaire* in 1977, has up till now been available in translation here. Metz ranges through analysis (Freud, Lacan, a little Klein) of what used to be called spectator psychology (here, voyeurism, fetishism, cinephilia), comparisons between the cinema experience and that of dream, phantasy and daydream (disappointingly obvious yet disarmingly honest in its inconclusiveness), to the final section, new to English readers, where he tries to deal with the stubborn "non-correspondence" of analytic terms (metaphor and metonymy) defined, variously, through psychoanalysis, linguistics and rhetoric. If a sense of *déjà vu* pervades, it comes from the very assimilation and sifting of Metz's influence through the dizzying currents of film theory in the 1970s which has now moved on to other shores. The present volume for Eco's *Story of the Rose*, with its satiric subtext on semioticians, suggests, already, nostalgia for those now distant passionate debates. Metz's book was criticized for being excessively difficult when it first appeared and it is a pity that in this meticulous and lucid translation it will now probably be of most interest to future students of intellectual history.

## Criticism

RICHARD ELLMANN. *James Joyce*. 887pp. Oxford University Press. £8.95. 0 19 281465 6. This new and revised edition of the original 1959 edition was first published in 1982 and reviewed in the TLS of December 17 that year by Hugh Kenner who took the book to task for its heavy reliance on the "Irish Fact" ("definable as anything you get told in Ireland, where you get told a great deal"). Kenner concluded "Yes, oh dear yes, this is the best Joyce biography we are likely to see... No, oh dear no, it is by no means definitive... Tone is a delicate matter; we don't want a hagiography. We'd like, though, to feel the presence of the mind that made the life worth writing and makes it worth reading."

COLIN MACCABE (Editor). *James Joyce: New Perspectives*. 198pp. Harvester Press. £5.95. 0 7108 0589 6. This is a stimulating collection which derives (apart from the edifice, a zestful reminiscence by Maria Jolas) from two series of lectures organized by the editor in 1977 and 1980. The "new perspectives" (newish might be more accurate) largely involve an emphasis on Joyce's "openness", on the plurality and indefinability of his texts, their dissolvings of fixed identity, subvertings of authority, questionings of an assumed origin and centre of meaning. The opening essay, Fritz Senn's "Righting *Ulysses*", opens that text in a characteristically witty and humane manner, urging the dynamism of Joyce's narrative and its readings, deploring critical tendencies to fix and freeze. Then Colin MacCabe makes a fair stab at an analytic introduction to *Finnegans Wake*, though the insistent dualism of his theoretical scheme can seem too fixed and formulaic – is it not an unhappy contradiction in much so-called deconstructionist criticism that valuable affirmations of openness and plurality should be couched in such rigid, indeed Procrustean terms? (To do him justice, MacCabe does sometimes recognize this, as a second essay here on *Ulysses* shows.) Other essays with this general emphasis are contributed by Jean-Michel Rabaté, one of the most stimulating and prolific of French Joyceans, here reworking and somewhat expanding, a little laboriously, an article previously published in French; by Maud Ellmann, reconsidering and revivifying the Homeric connection; and by Stephen Heath, again like Rabaté, reworking

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earlier work in French. Raymond Williams provides a brief, penetrating piece on *Exiles*; Patrick Parrinder traces the history of Joyce's "reception" (more an increasingly stiff rejection) from the English literary milieu of the 1920s and '30s; and Seamus Deane, in perhaps the most resonant of these essays, discusses the question of "Joyce and Nationalism".

## History

JOHN JULIUS NORWICH. *A History of Venice*. 673pp. Penguin. £8.95. 0 14 006623 3. First published by Allen Lane in two volumes: *Venice, the Rise to Empire* (1977), reviewed in the TLS of February 24, 1978, and *Venice, the Greatness and the Fall* (1981), reviewed in the TLS of June 11, 1982. The reviewer of the first volume wrote: "Viscount Norwich skillfully links the story of past events to their traces in the present buildings or tablets or arches or monuments; he even knows when to tell the reader about what isn't there, the 'humble group of old houses of wood and plaster' destroyed in 1948 to build a hideous modern hotel, or the 'little grove of elders' near the Campanile in the Piazza San Marco, where horses were tethered in the days when riding was still permitted." The reviewer laments the relative absence of social and cultural history.

CHARLES T. WOOD. *The Quest for Eternity: Manners and Morals in the Age of Chivalry*. 172pp. University Press of New England. £6.95. 0 87451 259 X. First published by Weidenfeld and Nicolson in 1970 under the title *The Age of Chivalry* and reviewed in the TLS of November 20 that year. The reviewer wrote: "In this elegant volume Professor Wood attempts, in the space of 150 pages, to survey the 'Manners and Morals' of Western Europe between the year 1000 and 1450. Quite properly, too, he includes in his survey an introduction devoted to the 'Formation of Medieval Europe' and an epilogue on 'Hard Times and the Chivalric Afterglow'. A commentary thus conceived could hardly hope to penetrate below the superficial, but the Professor carries his readers happily and rapidly along without serious mishap, through 'The World of the Millennium', 'The Age of Expansion (1050-1180)', and up at last to 'The Apogee' of the thirteenth century."

## Music

FRANKLIN B. ZIMMERMAN. *Henry Purcell 1659-1695: His life and times*. 473pp. University of Pennsylvania Press. £19.95. 0 8122 1136 7. According to the publishers' blurb the TLS greeted the original edition of Zimmerman's Purcell biography with the encomium: "Excellent... invaluable to students. No music library or any general library with an adequate music section should be without it." It is worth noting that the actual review, on September 7, 1967, said nothing of the kind. Zimmerman's analytical catalogue, published earlier in the same year, of all Purcell's known and attributed music, was praised as a "triumph of intellect and musicological skill over singularly intractable material"; the biography, designed to house material collected in the process of making the catalogue, was thought not to vanquish such intractability: "the early chapters especially are exasperating to read, all the more because of repeated admissions that there is a total lack of firm evidence." This second, revised edition includes a complete Purcell iconography, but no explanation is given of the tendency or extent of the revisions.

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## INDEX OF BOOKS REVIEWED

Anderson, William. *The Waking Dream*: 30 poems 312  
Atwood, Margaret. *Murder in the Dark* 311  
Bronke, David. *The Railway Navy: That Despicable Race of Men* 310  
Buschke, Matthias. *Great Britain and the Holy See 1746-1870* 297  
Calder, Angus, and Dorothy Sheridan (Editors). *Speak for Yourself: A Miscellany of Observations* 1937-49 298  
Calvesi, Maurizio, and Ester Coen. *Boccioni* 291  
Clark, Kenneth. *The Art of Humanism* 315  
Colman, Joanna. *A Portrait of Fryn: A biography of F. Tennyson Jesse* 294  
Collinson, Patrick. *Godly People: Essays on English protestantism and puritanism* 308  
Conder, Frank. *The Men Who Built Railways* 310  
Corn, Wanda M. Grant Wood. *The regionalist vision* 302  
De Francia, Peter. *Fernand Léger* 317  
Dixon, Alan. *The Immaculate Magpies* 312  
Edelman, David I. *The Dardic and Nuristani Languages* 295  
Frederick, S. J. Circa 1600: A revolution of style in Italian painting 313  
Fuehl, John, Gisela Bahr and John Willett (Editors). *Beyond Brecht - The Brecht Yearbook, Volume 11* 309  
Gordon, Mary McDougall. *Overland to California with the Pioneer Line: The Gold Rush diary of Bernard J. Reid* 310  
Haraszi-Takács, Marianna. *Spanish Genre Painting in the Seventeenth Century* 318  
Hertzfeld, Michael. *Once Upon More: Folklore, ideology and the making of modern Greece* 295  
Hibbard, Howard. *Caravaggio* 313  
Jerome, Jerome K. *My Life and Times* 294  
Ludis, Andrew. *Tudor Gold: Critical reappraisal and catalogue* 314  
Lodge, David. *Small World* 293  
Medvedev, Rny. *All Stalin's Men* 296  
Molz, Alfred. *Caravaggio* 313  
Posner, Donald. *Antoine Watteau* 299  
Purdy, Richard Little, and Michael Millgate (Editors). *The Collected Letters of Thomas Hardy: Volume IV, 1909-1913* 294  
Read, Peter. *Elizabeth. The House of Lords 1603-1649* 308  
Rosenblum, Robert, and H. W. Janson. *Art of the Nineteenth Century: Painting and sculpture* 316  
Schaefer, Susan Fromberg. *The Madness of a Seduced Woman* 311  
Schulz, Gerhard. *Die Deutsche Literatur zwischen Französischer Revolution und Restauration* 309  
Shepherd, W. G. Self-Love 312  
Singer, Isaac Bashevis. *The Penitent* 311  
Spies, Werner. *Max Ernst: L'oplog - The artist's other self* 303  
Stewart, J. Douglas. *Sir Godfrey Kneller and the English Baroque Portrait* 300  
Sullivan, Dick. *Navyman* 310  
Summers, Hal. *The Burning Book and Other Poems* 312  
Turnbull, Gael. *A Gathering of Poems: 1950-1980* 312  
Tyler, Ron. *Visions of America: Pioneer artists in a new land* 302  
Von Dollinger, Ignaz. *Briefwechsel 1820-1890: Band 4. Briefwechsel mit Lady Blennerhassett 1865-1886* 297  
Whiting, R. C. *The View from Cowley: The impact of industrialization upon Oxford, 1818-1939* 310  
Willett, John. *Brecht in Context* 309  
Wood, Christopher. *Olympian Dreamers: Victorian classical painters 1800-1914* 316  
Worpole, Ken. *Dockers and Detectives* 298

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